

R. L. Handa

**HISTORY  
OF  
FREEDOM  
STRUGGLE  
in PRINCELY  
STATES**

*Foreword*

*By*

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## FOREWORD

This book—History of Freedom Struggle in Princely States—giving a connected account of the struggle which freedom fighters had to wage in the former Indian States, has appeared not a day too soon. The story portrayed in these pages forms an integral part of the history of our national struggle for liberation from foreign rule. As the author has aptly pointed out the history of political agitation, for administrative reforms and freedom from autocratic rule in princely territories has not yet received at the hands of the modern historian the recognition that it deserves. The blame does not lie entirely with the historian. The large number of princely states, with varying sizes and still more varying standards of administration have made it an uphill task for the chronicler to venture an account which may involve all those erstwhile territories and give due place to the sacrifices and resistance of the states' people collectively and state-wise. This is because a part of the source material lies scattered and is not as easily available as material relating to the freedom struggle waged in the British Indian provinces.

The freedom struggle in the provinces ran, comparatively speaking, a straight course for the simple reason that their administrative set-up, political conditions and general awareness among the people formed, more or less, a uniform pattern. And, then, the provinces were, without doubt, important, forming two-thirds of India and claiming three-fourths of its total population. Admirable as the efforts to record the history of the freedom struggle in the

provinces have been, the history of the freedom fight in the princely territories such as this volume seeks to give, will go to supplement that narration by presenting an overall picture of our efforts towards emancipation from British domination

It is fortunate that the writer of this book, Shri R. L. Handa had been a close observer of, if not a participant in, the fight for freedom in the states as it developed in the thirties and late forties. Much of his narration, therefore, reads like an eye-witness's account, a fact which has considerably enhanced the value of the book. He had the good fortune of having close personal contact with most of the leaders of the All-India States' People's Conference, whose activities, particularly the annual sessions, he covered for the Press as a professional newspaper man.

The first few chapters of the book will serve to give a good idea of the conditions prevailing in most of the states and the general background which led to popular discontent and agitation and subsequently to the formation of All-India States' People's Conference, which was pledged to fight for civil liberties for the states people and to bring the states into line with the rest of the country politically and constitutionally.

One of the most significant chapters here is the one dwelling on the relation between the Indian National Congress and the All-India States' People's Conference. Though the British rulers, and not a few others in the country, looked upon the AISPC as the States' wing of the Congress, yet it was a fact that the two were independent organisations which on some occasions were not able to see eye to eye with each other. Leaders of AISPC felt that the Congress often seemed to equate India as a whole with the British Indian provinces or that, at any rate, it did not go



far enough to support the states' people in their demand for immediate democratisation and coming up to the constitutional level of the provinces. Of course, these were differences as in a family and, for that reason, were always got over, thanks to the sage advice of Mahatma Gandhi and the enthusiastic support of the states people's cause by front rank Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Bose, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Jaya Parkash Narain and others.

Of great historical importance as this background information and the account of Congress-AISPC relationship is, perhaps the most important part of the book is the chapter - 'Facets of Struggle and Resistance'—dealing with actual struggle for responsible government in the states waged by the Praja Mandals or the State Congress Committees. It is worthwhile recording, at least for the benefit of posterity, that as late as in 1939 when nearly half the country was ruled by the Congress Ministries, there was a prince who had the temerity to tell his people : 'My ancestors have won the state by sword and I mean to keep it by the sword.' Not only that, he went further to threaten the people's deputation that had called on him by saying: 'I advise you to get out of the Mandal and stop all kind of agitation, or else, remember, I am a military man; my talk is blunt and my bullet straight.'

But it will be wrong to assume that all the states were backward or all princes as vainglorious as the one I have referred to above. There were states, particularly in the south like Mysore, Travancore and Cochin which had stable administrations and which in certain matters like education, public health, rural reconstruction etc. had an edge over the most advanced of the provinces. Yet the nature of the personal rule and the British policy vis-a-vis the states were

such as to make them all look backward in the face of the constitutional advance in the provinces in 1937. The real struggle for responsible government in Mysore and other states was thus accentuated by the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy in the provinces. This aspect of the agitation for constitutional advance in the states has been dealt with in this book at some length with admirable objectivity. It is my duty to remember those friends who toiled, suffered and sacrificed during the struggle for freedom in princely states. Some are still with us; many more have gone leaving for us a legacy of hard work, patriotic approach and unstinted effort for the unification of the country. They deserve our gratitude.

As one who had the good fortune of participating in various capacities in the states people's struggle for constitutional advance, I welcome this book which will not only be filling a long-felt want but is also bound to form an integral part of the history of our national movement for emancipation from foreign domination and subsequent emergence of India as a secular democratic republic.

S. Nijalingappa

New Delhi,  
September 25, 1968.

## Preface

It was in December 1962 that at the instance of the late Prime Minister, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Balwantray Mehta assigned me the task of writing a connected account of the freedom struggle in the former native states of India. He dwelt at length on the importance of this task, saying that there was a feeling among the former subjects of princely states that their contribution in the national struggle for freedom had not so far been assessed, much less appreciated. He mentioned in this connection the few published histories of India's freedom struggle and deplored the fact that no writer had taken into account the political struggle that the states' people had to wage against heavy odds while resisting the autocratic rule of the princes and agitating for constitutional reforms. He, however, wanted me to consider his proposal and did not insist on a reply then and there.

The position was different a few days later when Balwantray Mehta conducted me to Prime Minister's House. On being put a straight question by Nehru whether I would like to undertake the job or not, I thankfully accepted the assignment. During the ten minutes that we were with the Prime Minister, he asked Balwantray Mehta to afford me all necessary facilities regarding books, published literature and relevant files of the All-India States' People's Conference.

Balwantray Mehta put me in touch with the Director of Archives of Rajasthan, Shri N. R. Khadgawat, from whom I got every possible assistance which I would like to acknow-

ledge thankfully. Khadgawat did not send me only a connected account of the annual meetings of the States' People's Conference but also scores of files and tracts and pamphlets published by or on behalf of the AISPC from time to time. But for this rich material it would have been impossible for me to do this book

Whenever Khadgawat happened to visit Delhi he always contacted me. We had several meetings during which we discussed the plan of the book and exchanged views on certain events and personalities having a bearing on our story.

Though I profited immensely from these discussions, I have refrained from adverting to matters bordering on the controversial. In consultation with Balwantray Mehta I had earlier decided to stick to the narration, preferring known facts to fanciful stories about princely doings, which are legion. As far as possible I have tried to vindicate the title of the book. It is, after all, a book of history and it would be only appropriate, I thought, to keep throughout before me the historical perspective. How far I have been able to live up to that ideal in dealing with the subject is for the reader to judge.

A word about the last chapter of the book, *SOME OBITER DICTA*. Strictly speaking, it is here that I have deviated from the norm of objective narration of facts. But, for that I had two good reasons. Firstly, the story of the freedom struggle having been completed, there were no more facts to be narrated. Secondly, the few observations made in the said chapter derive directly from the body of the facts dealt with in the earlier 400 pages. Students of current Indian history and readers of this book, I make bold to assume, would bear with me if they come up against an element of subjectivity in those observations.

I must offer my humble tribute of respect and gratitude to Jawahar Lal Nehru who since 1938 had been the biggest source of strength to the States people's movement and who,

naturally enough, was the first to conceive the idea of compiling a history of the freedom struggle in former princely territories. I was over-whelmed when he said "Look, Balwantray has been telling me that you can make a good job of it. Now that you are no longer with the President, you should be able to find time for it."

Balwantray Mehta did even more than that. He helped me with suggestions and advice and gave me time unreservedly in Delhi and Ahmedabad. He also went through the first draft of the manuscript sent to him in April 1965. It was largely as a result of his comments and suggestions that the manuscript was subsequently revised and expanded. Now that it is all over and the book is going to be released, I am over-powered by a sense of sorrow that Mehta is no more there to see it.

My thanks are also due to N. R. Khadgawat and his associates of the Rajasthan Archives who have spared no pains in furnishing whatever material I wanted in connection with this book,

R. L. H.  
NEW DELHI  
15 August, 1968

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History of Freedom  
Struggle in princely States

## Introduction

A few publications have lately appeared purporting to give a connected account of the Indian freedom struggle which culminated in the transfer of power into Indian hands in August, 1947. Two of these publications are particularly notable, one being an officially sponsored account of the freedom movement written by Dr. Tara Chand and the other, 'Our Freedom Struggle' by Dr. Mozumdar, an eminent historian. Both of these books contain a wealth of material relating to the national movement in modern times, particularly in the present century. Whatever critics or newspaper reviewers might have said about the books, it cannot be gainsaid that both of them seek to present facts relating to the freedom movement in an objective and unbiased manner.

Good and informative as the above books are, in a sense neither of them could claim to be comprehensive, since they are more or less exclusively devoted to the conduct of the national movement in what was then known as British India, Territories of the Indian princes known as native states come in for only a cursory mention, and that too primarily with a view to completing the narration of events as they unfolded



themselves in British Indian territory. It is a lacuna which cannot just be overlooked, for this leaves unaccounted all that happened in a sizeable part of the country during those fateful years. The native states comprised about 45 per cent of the total area of pre-partition India and accounted for no less than one fourth of its total population.

One might contend that the history of the freedom struggle is not much impaired by the exclusion of happenings in native states, for the freedom struggle was born and nurtured mainly in British Indian territory. Firstly, this contention is faulty in as much as all that took place in the princely states forms an integral part of the larger struggle and was bound up with happenings elsewhere in action-reaction relationship. Whenever the movement gained momentum in the provinces, neighbouring states were invariably affected and the agitation always found some echo, howsoever faint, among the state subjects. Secondly, the conditions obtaining in states throw a valuable light on the nature of the freedom struggle as a whole and bring out what an uphill task it was in the beginning even to look askance at the Darbars of small territories ruled by the princes.

Incidentally, the very character of these states and the varying levels of administration obtaining there have a bearing on the grievances of the Indian people, for the division of the people between those living in British India and Indian states was utterly artificial. Both of them belonged to the same ethnic stock, spoke the same language or languages and had common aspirations and ambitions. Yet the people living in the states were, for the most part, deprived of the most elementary civic rights. With a few exceptions, none of the states had any representative institutions, and even in them which had, the rulers' word had the sanctity of law. It would be true to say that on the political and administrative plane

the states could boast of nothing much comparable with what obtained in the provinces.

One-fourth of the people of India thus lived not only in undemocratically governed territories having no representative institutions comparable with those functioning in the provinces but in a state of feudal bondage. The ruler and his administration in most cases being identical, any agitation for reforms or demand for any improvement in the method of governance was interpreted as treason against the ruling prince. This naturally let loose the iron hand of the administration on those who dared to raise their voice in favour of change of any kind or in support of freedom struggle in neighbouring British Indian territory.

Carrying on of any kind of agitation or struggle for liberalisation of their administration in the states was, therefore, infinitely more hazardous and difficult than in British India. If the administration in British India was bureaucratic, in the states it was anti-deluvian and archaic. For this reason alone, if for nothing else, the chronicler of India's freedom struggle cannot withhold his appreciation for and rightful tribute to those who made bold to support the cause of freedom in India as a whole and to plead for the introduction of an element of popular government in states.

The study in retrospect of the vivisection of India into more than six hundred states and their subsequent liberation from autocratic rule in one sweep by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, comprises in our country's history a chapter more thrilling than that relating to the unification of Germany under Bismarck in the last century. To appreciate what constitutes the foremost success of our freedom era, one must need see the earlier picture. And for that it is essential to dwell at some length on the struggle that the people living in the states had to wage against heavy odds.

One should know, for example, that the present day centrally administrated State of Himachal Pradesh was once split into over twenty petty states under rulers, each one of whom looked upon himself as sovereign and one of whom actually shot four persons with his revolver at the door-step of his palace in 1939 practically with impunity, that in one of the states the ruler spent more on the upkeep of his dogs than on public health and that the enlightened Britishers themselves had begun to call the princes as wastrels and their states as "backwaters" consisting of "derelict, roadless tracts" in political India. The vagaries, idiosyncracies and capriciousness of the princess might have lent a touch of romance and relaxation to Indian affairs of those times, if only they were not the cause of untold misery of the people and their utter degradation.

In a way the Indian princess and their governments provided a perfect buffer between the British Government in India and the freedom agitators. The queer combination of events which led to the genesis of these princely principalities, the protection which the Paramount Power extended to them asking only for loyalty to the British Crown in return and the gradually widening gulf between the states and British India, made the British power in India look to the princes and their states as bulwark against the rising tide of popular agitation for freedom in India. The forces of freedom, on the other hand, thought of the states as so many *Ulsters* planted by a foreign government in all parts of the country.

The British Government thought of safeguarding their vested interests in this vast land with the support of the princes who had long begun to link their survival with the presence of British power in this country. Freedom to the princes meant the death knell of their privileges and prerogatives. Foreign domination of the country provided for them a perpetual guarantee of protection, personal safety and security of rule and continuity of their lineage. Naturally the

Congress agitation for freedom was anathema to most of the ruling princes. It is all the more natural therefore that those who had the courage to stand up against the princes in these circumstances, should deserve our meed of praise and fulsome admiration. After the merger of the states and their democratisation, many of these people filled offices of responsibility in the new set up and took and are still taking a prominent part in the shaping of India's destiny.

It is for this reason that no history of India's freedom struggle can be said to be complete or exhaustive without taking into account the connected story of the struggle waged in princely territories.

Even if it is argued that the All-India States People's Conference, the principal organization of the people of states was a hand-maid of the Indian National Congress, the need for a separate account of the freedom struggle in the states cannot be ruled out. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the Congress, though always sympathetic and friendly, could never see its way to respond fully to the wishes of the states people.

Throughout it maintained an attitude of non-interference in the internal affairs of the states. In consequence the states people were thrown on their own resources to keep the struggle for responsible government going. They have to build up local leadership to unite states subjects in a common cause. It was good as well, for this leadership had a crucial role to play during 1946-47 and soon after Independence. The rank and file of the states people naturally looked at these leaders for help and guidance though the three leading lights of the Congress, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel could always be depended upon for advice and support.

Conversely, let us for a moment try to imagine what would have happened to the country if the leaders of the states

people had not organised public opinion in those princely territories in favour of freedom and alignment with the Indian National Congress. It is unpredictable to say the least whether strongwilled rulers like the late Maharaja of Jodhpur, would not have acceded to Pakistan or decided in favour of virtual independence, if their people had not demonstrated in an unmistakable manner which way their affinities lay. The course of events in Travancore whose Dewan had declared in favour of independence of the state two months before India became free and in Junagadh whose ruler had actually acceded to Pakistan, was sure to have taken a different turn if the states people had not been organised and trained to voice their demands and thus given the lie to the Dewan in one case and the Nawab in the other. The story of merger and integration of the states, which has been hailed all over as "the world's biggest bloodless revolution", might well have taken a different turn, but for the hard work of the states people and their leaders to keep the torch of struggle burning.

It is the story of these people and their struggle which forms the theme of this volume, and which, incidentally, has been no more than merely touched upon in other histories dealing with the freedom struggle in India as a whole. This volume purports to supplement what has been said by Dr Tara Chand and Dr Mozumdar in their admirable works.

Thanks to the cruel repression to which freedom fighters were subjected in the states there is ample good material available for compiling a separate history of the freedom movement in the native states. This history read in conjunction with the history of the Indian freedom struggle would, one hopes, give a clear and more comprehensive picture of all that happened in this sub continent before the British Government handed over power to the accredited representatives of the Indian people.

## I

### What were the States ?

Politics without history has no root and history without politics has no fruit; thus said the famous British historian, Prof. Seeley. This observation proves to be only too true when applied to questions like the problem of Indian states. The political aspect of that problem can never be adequately grasped without an appreciation of the historical background. And the history of those states, in turn, will not hold the least interest without an understanding of the political mess into which the states led the princes, their subjects, the Paramount Power and, above all, India.

However, before dealing with the history of the states let us have an idea of the problem itself. How many were the states, and what were their main features.

Strewn capriciously over India, there were about 600 principalities which did not form part of the British India. Historically the main common feature distinguishing these territories from the Provinces was that, unlike the latter, they had not been annexed by the British power. Thus, politically speaking there were two Indias, "British India, governed by the Crown according to the statutes of Parliament and enact-

ments of the Indian legislature, and the Indian States under the suzerainty of the Crown and still for the most part under the personal rule of the Prince<sup>\*</sup>."

How these territories, staggering in number and widely desparate in size and importance, came into being, forms the subject of the next chapter. Here we shall detail some of the salient facts and features characterising the Indian states.

In the Government of India Act, 1935, the term 'Indian State' was defined as including "any territory, whether described as a state, estate and a jagir or otherwise belonging to or under the suzerainty of a ruler, who is under the suzerainty of His Majesty, and not being a part of British India". Apparently, this definition did not help either the erstwhile Government or the people to be very sure as to the exact number of states. The Butler Committee and the Simon Commission, for example, applied this term to 562 units, whereas the Joint Committees of Parliament on Indian Constitutional Reforms referred to 600 units as states. No two books or even official reports on India ever agreed as to the exact number of the states.

Another interesting feature of the states was the wide variety as regards their size, revenue and general importance. At one end of the scale were states like Hyderabad and Kashmir which were as big as the United Kingdom and on the other end were minute holdings in Kathiawar and Simla Hills which were no bigger than children's parks in metropolitan towns. Out of the 562 states, as many as 454 had collectively an area of less than 1000 sq. miles and 452 had a population of less than a million. It is only about 30 among them that possessed the area, population and resources of an average British Indian district. On the other hand there were as many as 15 states with territories under a square mile each. Three

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\* Butler Committee's Report

of these could not boast of a population of even 100 souls. As many as 202 states had an area of less than 10 sq. miles each. Inspite of these staggering disparities, the term 'state' was applied to all these territories.

The revenue figures of the states, as known from Public Accounts, showed the same disparity. As many as 19 states had a revenue of Rs. 1 crore or more a year, 7 had revenue ranging between 50 lakhs to one crore and the figure descended gradually till in the case of petty principalities it showed a revenue approximating to an artisan's average wages.\*

The administrative set-ups of the states varied equally greatly. There was a very wide difference in the degree of administrative efficiency reached by the most advanced and the most backward. According to official records of the Chamber of Princes, 60 states had set up some form of legislative bodies by 1938. In several others, schemes for associating the people with the governance of their states were under consideration in 1945-46. In most cases, the development of representative institutions did not approximate to the growth of self-governing institutions in the provinces. For example, Hyderabad, the biggest and the most important Indian state, never had a popularly elected legislative assembly till the day it was taken over by the Central Ministry of States in 1948.

The truth is that neither the princes nor the Paramount Power or for that matter any apologist of the princely order could ever claim any progressive or modern trend in the states. In his official report, Sir Harcourt Butler was himself obliged to say: "There are states patriarchal or quasi—feudal which still linger in a medieval atmosphere, and states which are purely under autocratic administration."†

Clearly the states continued to exist for a century or more on sufferance. Enlightened officers of the Political Depart-

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\* White Paper on 'Indian States (1948), page 4.

† Butler Committee's Report



ment were often critical of their administration. When things went to a limit, as they often did, even the Viceroy had to pull up the princes, though in guarded language. In a memorable speech, Lord Curzon dwelt on the responsibility of the Paramount Power for the internal administration of the states in the following words

"The native prince cannot remain *in a vis* the empire as loyal subject of His Majesty the King Emperor and *in a vis* his own people as a frivolous and irresponsible despot. He must justify and not abuse the authority committed to him. He must be the servant as well as master of his people; he must learn that his revenues are not secured to him his own self-gratification, but for the good of his subjects, that his internal administration is only exempt from correction in proportion as it is honest, and that his *Gad* is not intended to be a *devan* of indulgence but the stern seat of duty. His figure should not be merely known on the polo ground or on the racecourse or in the European hotels. His real work, his princely duty lies among his own people. By this standard shall I, at any rate, judge him. By this test will in the long run political institution perish or survive' \*

It is not the Viceroys alone who took such a stern view of their duties and spoke harsh words to the princes. Foreign visitors and intellectuals often wondered why the institution of the states was kept alive by the British. Lord Rowlinson described the states as a "twentieth century medievalism" and spoke of them thus: "I have come to the conclusion that it (the states system) is one of the most uneconomic in the world today. In general methods and in details it is out of date. The state of display which the Moghals introduced in India on a lavish scale two hundred and odd years ago, still surrounds the Viceroy, the governance of provinces and the Indian states."

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\* Speeches of Lord Curzon Vol I, page 87

In his famous book "Last Home of Mystery", Col. Powell has the same opinion to express. Says he : "There can be no denying, however, that the great majority of the princes lived in a fashion which would bring the rulers of larger European states to the verge of bankruptcy or revolution. The Indian people are poor, so it is all the more astonishing that their princes should have seemingly unlimited cash at their command."

It did little credit to the princely order that they managed to provoke even a mild man and a liberal politician like the late Srinivas Sastri. In the course of a public address at Cochin, Shri Sastri, while referring to the states rulers, said : "They are to be seen anywhere where enjoyment can be bought with their people's money. You go to London, you go to Paris, you go to any fashionable cities and you meet some Indian Raja or Maharaja, dazzling the people of Europe and corrupting those who go near him."

Extravagance was thus a well-known feature of the lives of Indian princes. Their personal budgets known as privy purses bore no relation to the resources of their states and the needs of their people. They were terribly fond of exhibiting their jewels and making a vulgar show of their wealth. For our benefit, Col. Powell has recorded the following in his book about the princes who had to be in New Delhi for attending the annual sessions of the Chamber of Princes. The meetings of the Chamber afforded an opportunity to the princes to display their diamonds and ride their polo ponies in the metropolis of India. "For a stay of only a fortnight, a prince had also brought with him from....., 300 miles away, two score Cabinet Ministers, court officials, ADCs and Secretaries, upward of a 100 servants, a detachment of household infantry for sentry duty on the camp, thirty and odd motor cars and some 60 polo ponies."

The fact is that just before World War II started, Indian

states as an institution had gathered so much odium and earned such an unpopularity that anyone without being a prophet could have *safely predicted an early end of the system*. When the states people and their leaders expressed this view it was dismissed as coming from one-sided critics of their rulers. When Congress leaders and other British Indian public men happened to criticise the princes and the state Governments, the Government of India turned a blind eye on the plea that they were professional detractors of the foreign government and all that it did in India. But the truth is that all educated people, Indians or foreigners, knew that the states system had developed dangerous cracks and the whole structure might crumble any day. The very idea of one-man rule was revolting, particularly when the ruler was protected by an outside power against whose might the people felt helpless. Ranga Iyer referring to this quandary wrote thus.

"One-man rule is bad enough even when the man is able but when it degenerates into the rule of a man who is addicted to the worst vices of oriental despotism—woman, wine and idle amusements at the cost of the people—it becomes a nightmare. Were a referendum taken today among the subjects, they would cheerfully vote for the annexation of the states to British India. The states exist today because of the mercy of the British

"Had there been in British India one-thousandth of that corruption and dishonesty and oppression and uncontrolled autocracy you find in Indian states the British Raj would have perished long ago"\*

But this is one side of the picture. The princes were no mere idlers. They had money and brains when it came to self-defence. Their agents were always active in London hobnobbing with Members of Parliament and trying to create

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\* India—Peace or War", page 162

a favourable opinion among them. At the time when the Butler Committee was at work, the princes borrowed the services of an eminent lawyer and writer, A. P. Nicolson and persuaded him to prepare their brief. His book, 'Scraps of Paper' became famous in later years as an exposition of the extreme view that the princes ought to be treated as sovereign monarchs in the light of the treaties signed between their ancestors and the East India Company. Nicolson had the audacity to plead not only for the freedom of the princes from the thralldom of the Political Department, but he also advocated that the system of Indian states was preferable to British rule in the Indian provinces. He quoted Sir Walter Lawrence as saying "I admire the Indians, and respect their great qualities, and believe in their great future. And because I hold that their future is endangered by the recent experiments—by the concessions which conciliate no one and merely weaken our Government and puzzle and exasperate the people—I venture to suggest another experiment, a new form of Government that would appeal to Indian ideal, and would not weaken the British connection. I would turn the whole of British India into Indian states."\*

The states, pure accidents of history as they were, did not necessarily exist as integral blocks of territory. Their territories in many cases dovetailed into those of the adjoining provinces, and their boundaries were so irregular that there were many princely enclaves in British Indian territory and *vice versa*. For example, the Punjab Sikh States of Patiala, Nabha and Jind had one district each allotted to them as reward by the British Government as a token of their services in suppressing the great revolt of 1857, situated between Delhi and Alwar, more than 100 miles off their main territory. The small Simla Hill state of Kalsia had a block of fertile villages located in the heart of Ferozepur district. The

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\* "Scraps of Paper" page 31.

system of national communications essential to the welfare of the whole country, passed in and out of the territories of the Indian states

*"A community of interests in the wider economic field linked the states with the provinces. If the states and the provinces failed to cooperate in implementing policies on matters of common concern, there was a vacuum which rendered it impossible to enforce effective measures in respect of such matters in any part of the country"*\*

This is exemplified by the famous Rajkot episode of 1938 which led to so much trouble between that state and the Congress Ministry in Bombay, leading to Gandhiji's fast.\*\*

The distribution of principal communities over the territories of the states was such as to admit of no general rule. While there were many states where the rulers and the majority of his subjects belonged to the same community, there were important exceptions to it. Hyderabad, Kashmir, Bhopal and Junagarh, for example, were states in which the rulers professed faiths different from the religion of the majority communities. In fact, there was not much to distinguish between the states and the provinces so far as communal composition of the population went. According to pre-1947 figures 27 per cent and 26 per cent respectively of the total population of Hindus and Muslims of India as a whole were to be found in states. As for the Indian Christians and the Sikhs, their population residing in states was 50 per cent and 36 per cent respectively.

Every state had its own financial structure and fiscal laws so that while oppressive taxation law prevailed in many petty states making life a hard job for the poor, quite a few bigger states had no income-tax of any kind. Such states,

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\* White Paper on States

\*\* Details of this episode have been given in a subsequent chapter

notably Hyderabad, Indore and Gwalior attracted capital from British India and other States, which explained the presence of important industrial units operating in these states in 1947.

Internally, the people of the Indian states were not considered British subjects, and it was at a later stage as a result of negotiations that states subjects were allowed to compete for All-India services. As foreign affairs were exclusively looked after by British Government in India, Indian states people were British subjects in international law.

Such were the states ruled by Indian princes. Their large number, their sprawling boundaries, their feudal administrations, their so-called oriental setting and their bejewelled rulers presented a picture which now and then charmed a foreign visitor in search of ancient relics. But as soon as one realised that 75 million people paid a heavy penalty for the making of this mosaic, one could not help sympathising with the states people and lending support to their struggle for fundamental rights and their demand for at least responsive, if not responsible, government.

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## States : Historical Background

'The fierce little campaigns between the French and the English in the Carnatic plunged the Company into the confused, welter of South Indian war and politics. Clive's dispersal of Siraj ud-Daula's disorderly host at Plassey made them virtual masters of Bengal. This was in 1757. Only sixteen years later, in 1773, came North's Regulating Act, and Warren Hasting's repudiation of the tribute which the Company had been paying to the Moghul Emperor. The British found themselves suddenly committed to the annexation and administration of vast territories, and in close relations with various Indian rulers and governments."

—Sir Sidney Low

The most important part of the process of emergence of Indian States is wound up with the history of the establishment of British supremacy in India. Though many of these states had roots in the past history of India, a large majority of them were created by the British, some as a deliberate measure in the interest of defence of British interests and others merely as a concession to *status quo*. The motives of the British were varied. If sometimes recognition to a ruler

was given in order to befriend or at least to neutralise him, often officers of the East India Company conferred rulership on troublesome elements as a means to soften them, almost in a spirit of "please yourself". The state of Tonk in Rajasthan was the most outstanding example of this category of states. This state was created for a descendant of Chetu, the notorious Pindari in the hope of weaning him from his nefarious activities. On occasions the British took the line of least resistance and as long as their interests were safe they did not mind recognising existing rulers amenable to them and creating new ones if that promised to work better. The result was that during one hundred years, from 1757 to 1857, the number of native states went on increasing either as a result of positive policy or acceptance of the inevitable or as sheer accident.

Nevertheless, it is correct, as V.P. Menon has said, that in the hands of the East India Company a warehouse was expanded into a province ; a province into an empire. "Establishment of the Princely States strewn over all parts of India was an essential link in the process of this 'glorious achievement' brought about by the agents of the company in India, not with the blessings and goodwill of their principals in England but in spite of their express discouragement."\*

Of the 600 odd Princely States of India, many claimed a lineage going back to antiquity. Even if it was not historically true, as obviously it was not in most cases, some of them took pains to establish links with a hoary past to gain distinction and standing. The Muslim States like Hyderabad, Bhopal, Rampur, etc., which could not possibly stretch their history beyond the Muslim period, contented themselves with linking their ancestry with distinguished Mughal Subedars or Muslim soldiers of fortune. The fact is that the

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\* V.P. Menon—The story of the Integration of the Indian States.



only Hindu States which could claim old or even ancient lineage were Travancore, Udaipur, Jodhpur and a few other Rajput States. A vast majority of other principalities were a creation of the accidents of recent history of which the East India Company, its policy and designs were the principal factors.

To understand this development we must picture to ourselves the disintegration of the Moghul empire in India soon after the death of Aurangzeb. For a time Muslim States continued to exist under the subedars owing no more than formal allegiance to the Mughal Darbar in Delhi. If things had been left to themselves and the European powers, the French and the British, particularly the latter, had not joined the fray, there is little doubt that the Marhattas would have made a clean sweep of the remnants of Muslim power in India and nothing could have prevented their emerging as the most effective and central power in India by replacing the Mughal empire. The game of alliances and counter-alliances which the East India Company started after Clive's victory at the battle of Plassey in 1757 laid the foundations of the institution of Indian States with a view primarily to protecting their own interests and holding fast against the storm of confusion waging all round. Officers of the East India Company launched on their treaty-making activities in sheer self-defence.

These activities of the East India Company, generally speaking, fall into two periods—1757 to 1813 and 1813 to 1857. The first period was marked by a desire to confine their interests to trading in and around the British settlements and, as far as possible, to avoiding entanglements beyond the ring fence of this limited liability. The preamble to Pitt's India Bill of 1784 declared that "to pursue schemes of conquest and dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour and the policy of this nation." But

this statement of general policy is by no means a historical fact. The truth is that in spite of the efforts of the Governor General to comply with the wishes of the Directors at home by adhering to the policy of non-intervention and limitation of liability, alliance and treaty-making continued to bring more and more states within the framework of the Company's jurisdiction. Perhaps it was good as well that the Britishers in India did not stick blindly to the letter of the instructions received from home. Developments in India indicated a different policy. This is how this change is explained and sought to be justified by British historians :

"The decline of Mughal authority, the Maratha invasions, the war with the French, and the intrigues of the latter in the states to the detriment of British interests, the ambitions of the military adventurers of the Haidar Ali and Tipu type, Napoleon's dream of an expedition to India, Nepal's lust for accretions of Indian territory, Ranjit Singh's efforts to extend the domination secured by him in the trans-Sutlej Punjab into territories within British spheres of influence in the Cis-Sutlej, the Pindari's marauding incursions and their use of weak states as a *pied-a-terre* for pillaging neighbouring countries—all these events forced upon British authorities the need of alliances to safeguard their own interests, to protect their friends and to promote that pacification of the sub-continent, almost overwhelmed in a welter of unrest, without which trade, the Company's chief objective, could not be carried on. This involved a deviation from a policy of alliance with a few states within or adjoining the ring-fence of the Company's sphere of possession and interest, to a far reaching inclusion of principalities in the interior of India in schemes of protection, in engagements for subordinate isolation; and finally in forms of partnership and union with what was becoming the paramount power in India."\*

\* Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency—The Indian States and Indian Federation—p. 34-35.

As the times changed the East India Company found itself involved in alliances, it naturally began to feel important with every successive achievement in the battle field and every stroke of good luck at the game of diplomacy. It is, however, clear from the language of the treaties entered into between the Company and the Indian Princes in the earlier period that the British authorities dealt with the states on a footing of political equality. The Company assumed the role of no more than *primus inter pares*. But as more and more states began to clamour for British protection and started looking to them for their own survival, the tone of British authorities changed, and so did the language of the treaties. If the earlier treaties spoke of the establishment or permanent friendship, the latter day engagements made no bones about the superior status of the British and the states having a subordinate status.

It was becoming clear that the principal power in India were the British and that in sheer self-interest and for survival every Princely State must necessarily be on their right side. Treaties entered into with Indian states under the early stages aimed at no more than the maintenance of the Company's privileged position in trade against its rivals."

As for the latter period Menon says

"So far as the states were concerned, the influence of the Company over their internal administration rapidly increased during the period following the retirement of Lord Hastings. Its Residents became gradually 'transformed from diplomatic agents representing a foreign power into executives and controlling officers of a superior Government.' They assumed so much authority that a certain Colonel Macaulay wrote to the Rajah of Cochin 'The Resident will be glad to learn that on his arrival in Cochin, the Rajah will find it

convenient to wait on him."\*

With this change in circumstances, the status of the Company and the attitude of Indian Princes, a clause was incorporated under subsequent engagements authorising the Company, "in the interest of general welfare...from time to time to interfere to regulate disputed successions, to prevent dismemberment of states, to suppress rebellion against the lawful sovereign, to check gross misrule, to stop inhuman practices and to secure religious tolerance."\*\*

It was on these trends that Dalhousie based his policy of annexation as a result of which several large princely territories like Satara, Jhansi and Nagpur were annexed. It was these trends that made it possible for Dalhousie to enunciate his doctrine of "lapse". By the time of the outbreak of the first organised revolt against the British in 1857, large chunks of Princely territories had been annexed, so that the territory under the Company's direct control could form sizeable provinces containing about two-thirds of India's population and more than half of its area.

The third period in the history of the Indian States begins with the Proclamation of Queen Victoria in 1858. Assuaging the feelings of the Princes and assuring them of protection and continuity of their ruling houses in perpetuity the Royal Proclamation said:

"We desire no extension of our territorial possessions; and while we will permit no aggression upon our dominion or our rights to be attempted with impunity, we shall sanction no encroachment on those of others. We shall respect the rights, dignity and honour of Native Princes as our own; and we desire that they as well as our own subjects should

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\* "The Story or Integration of the Indian States" p. 6

\*\* Montmorency—"The Indian States and Indian Federation p. 42

enjoy that prosperity and that social advancement which can only be secured by internal peace and good government"

The Indian rulers, though they had still unhappy memories of the short shrift that Dalhousie gave to some members of their order, mostly remained aloof from the revolt of 1857. In certain cases they had also extended active assistance to the British in suppressing the uprisings in spite of pressure from their own troops and many of their subjects. Lord Canning himself acknowledged the role of the states as 'breakwaters in the storm which would have swept over us in one great wave'. "Where would we have been if Scindia, the Nizam and the Sikh Chiefs etc., had been annexed, the subordinate presidencies abolished, the whole army thrown into one and the revenue system brought into one mould", enquired Elphinstone with characteristic frankness. The British power had now come to realise that the states could play a vital role as a bulwark of British rule in India. Subsequently the British Parliament adopted a new Act (Act for the better Government of India) putting the seal of parliamentary authority on the Queen's assurances. The Act provided, among other things, that "all treaties made by the Company shall be binding upon Her Majesty". This was the end of the policy of annexation to be replaced by the policy of perpetuation of the Indian States. In fact, now the pendulum swung on the other extreme. The institution of States was henceforward fostered with care and a solicitude which was to make the princes the most pampered pillars of British imperialism in India.

The status of all the states had not remained stationary since 1857. The paramount power could and actually did raise the status of certain chiefs from time to time. Since 1883 particularly the general policy of the paramountcy had been to level up the smaller states with the bigger ones by raising the status of the former. The paramountcy never

worried to attach any cogent reasons for following such a policy. The only justification it gave was that it had done so "for reasons of Imperial policy". The procedure adopted was the revision of sanads periodically. Every sanad in turn had raised the status of chiefs and increased their powers.

The most glaring instance of raising the status of jagirdars into ruling chiefs is provided by the former Orissa states. The Orissa States Enquiry Committee in 1939 conclusively established, through reports and documents of the Political Department itself, that the status of Orissa states was of recent origin. Before 1888 these states were treated as parts of British India and their chiefs as no more than jagirdars. It was only in 1888 that the Secretary of State for India-in-Council decided that "in accordance with a ruling of the High Court in the case of Mayurbhanj these states did not form part of British India, and in consequence of this decision, new sanads were given on the 27th October, 1894 to all the chiefs defining their status, powers and position."\*

What was this Mayurbhanj case? The Orissa States Committee give the whole chain of events to explain it. In July, 1881, they say, in a criminal case, a Bench of the High Court of Judicature at Fort William in Bengal decided that Mayurbhanj was part of British India. Judges Cunningham and Prinsep gave an able exposition of the arguments in favour of their decision. This ruling of the High Court, goes on the report, greatly disturbed the Raja of Mayurbhanj. He, therefore, wrote to the Bengal Government urging them not to recognise the decision of the High Court.

It is not without interest to know what the Superintendent, Tributary Mahals, Cuttack (as Orisa States were then called) had to say on this matter. He submitted the following opinion on the future the Mahals:

"It may, therefore, be a question whether, when the system of administration is being regulated by law, it would

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\* Orissa States Enquiry Committee Report,

not be well to take away judicial executive authority all together from the Chiefs, and to place these in the hands of special officers appointed by the Government. If this should be considered advisable, the states north of Brabminee, viz, Mayurbhanj, Nilgiri, Keonjhar and Pappabera, might be formed into a Deputy Commissionership, with its headquarters at Keonjhar or Baripada, and the states south of the Brabminee might be formed into another with its headquarters at Angul. A subsidiary staff of subordinate officers could be located at convenient points throughout their jurisdictions, with civil, revenue and criminal powers. There is nothing in our arrangements with the chiefs to bar any arrangement of this sort. Our agreements with them are exactly the same as were made with other Zamindars whose Estates were at once brought under the regulations. If the Executive and Judicial administration be from the chiefs, they would fall into the status of Zamindars of permanently settled estates, and they would be in all matter subject to the jurisdiction of the courts. The Executive and judicial administration would be placed on a basis more commensurate than now with the obligations of Government towards the people \*\*

The Superintendent, Tributary Mahals was again called upon to give his opinion when the Raja of Mayurbhanj represented his case to the Bengal Government. The note of the Superintendent contained the following sentence

"I have very carefully considered and studied this question, and I have come to the decided opinion that the Tributary states of Orissa are parts of British India, as defined in Clause 8, Section 2, Act I of 1858, and I think future legislation should distinctly recognise this, \*\*\*

Finally the Bengal Government also expressed their own opinion on this matter in most clear and unambiguous

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\* Ibid

\*\* Ibid

terms. In the course of a letter to the Government of India, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal said:

"In submitting, for the consideration of the Government of India with, he fears, some lengthy details, and the circumstances connected with this question, the Lieutenant Governor has no hesitation in saying that his own opinion inclines very strongly to the contention that these Tributary states of Orissa are included in British India, and though for the present, as far as judicial decision goes, the ruling of the full Bench of the High Court on the 11th March, 1882 may support the opposite view, it is clear that when two Divisional Benches of the High Court have held differently, the question if at any time brought before a full Bench of the whole Court might result in the affirmation of the conclusion that the states in question are included in British India."\*

Thus, concludes the Orissa Report, the Government of Bengal only held the view that Orissa states formed part of British India, but they also wanted the Government of India to issue a clear and emphatic declaration to this effect.

Yet in spite of all these weighty considerations, the Secretary of State for India declared that the Orissa States were not British territories, and granted Sanads to them conferring on them "partial sovereign rights as a chief tributary and subordinate to the British Government." Nobody could have been deceived by the anxiety of the paramount power to create as many states in India as possible. In doing so even if historical truth and people's welfare had to be sacrificed, it hardly mattered. Truly did Sir John Strachey write in 1910 that "the Mutinies of 1857 showed conclusively that the native states are a source to us, not of weakness, but of strength."

The effect of this policy on small states was disastrous. The mere fact that their status had been raised, or the hint

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\*Ibid,



that it could be raised, made the rulers transgress all limits of economy. Every ruler began to aspire after the highest of living. The feeling that the paramount power had increased their powers and dignity could not but loosen the strings of their purse without inflating the purse itself. Levelling up of status was closely followed by a levelling up of Privy purses. Whatever the discrepancy in resources and revenue, it is amazing that there was not much of difference in palace expenses in most of the small states. Indeed the Rulers of small states appeared to be obsessed by the idea of pomp and dignity almost to the point of neurosis. 78836

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Queen Victoria's proclamation had gone a long way in assuaging the feelings of the Princes and assuring them that *whatever the British authorities might or might not do*, the continuity of the ruling households was no longer in doubt. They were no less comforted by the fact that leading statesmen in England had begun to realise the importance of Indian states in view of the services they had rendered in suppressing the revolt in 1857 by actively siding with the British. Opinion was also gaining ground in British official circles that the steadfast loyalty of the Princes would ever be an asset for the British power in India for tiding any future storms there. As if to reinforce this favourable reaction among the princely order the Queen had announced a change in the designation of the Governor-General, now calling him Viceroy and Governor-General.

Ever since this assurance was given, no territorial acquisition was made by the British power. So far from seeking opportunities to incorporate Indian states, the British Government declined them when they seemed to offer themselves. The notable instance was that of Mysore, which was restored to the rule of the Hindu Prince who represented the former reigning family. Later, in 1911, Banaras was recons-

stituted a state after remaining a part of a British province for nearly a hundred years.

The states had thus come to occupy a permanent place in Indian polity. Not only numerically but also politically and economically, Indian India now constituted an important part of the Queen's Indian dominions. But as developmental activity in the spheres of communications, transport, railways irrigation and other economic fields gathered momentum, the line of demarcation between British and Indian territories tended to become dim. If tele-communications and transport were to be developed properly in India, it was not possible to make any rigid distinction between the territory of the Provinces and the Indian states. It must be said to the credit of the Britishers that while accomplishing this task they attached greater importance to the development of the lines of communications than to the feelings of the Princes who were asked to cede territory for the purpose. For building roads and railways, the territory of Indian states was treated as if the Government of India had direct control over it. Some of the Princes demurred and said openly that it was breach of treaty rights, but their overt protests were brushed aside. Conflicts of opinion also arose over matters like practical monopoly of the production and export of salt. Some states, like Cutch and Mandi, for example desired to maintain their rights to mine salt or manufacture it, but in the interests of unified control and administration, they were not allowed to do so.

Then there was the question of restricting internal consumption of opium and to cut down production for export to other countries, according to a phased programme laid down by international institutions. The states which derived considerable income from the cultivation of opium protested, but once again they did it without success. The British Government made a pretence of carrying on nego-

tiations and arriving at an amicable settlement, but often these decisions involved no more than presentation by Political Officers of prepared drafts to the Princes to be signed by the latter. The truth is that in respect of the states the British authority was constantly seeking agreement to on one thing or the other for which the treaty did not provide

Another question which resulted in occasional frictions related to certain ceremonies and the traditional prerogatives of the Princes. While the Princes were always trying to mould a position parallel to that of a sovereign king "the British authority was concerned that the essence of the relation of the British Crown to the subordinate Ruler of a quasi-sovereign state should neither be compromised nor ignored." At the turn of the 19th century, a situation had developed when each side felt that if it gained an inch a yard would be taken. Sir Geoffrey de Montmorency summarised the position in these words:

"After a time it became generally apparent that, although the period of concluding treaties of importance had come to an end, political practices and the interpretation of treaties were increasingly to engage the attention of the Indian rulers and the British authority. In particular the doctrine of paramountcy, which in very general terms may be said to be the taking of action by the British authority for the common weal in a direction not specifically covered by a treaty or engagement, and the formulation of policy by reading treaties as a whole and taking usage and sufferance also into consideration began to exercise the minds of the Princes and their advisers and to arouse their criticism in particular instances."<sup>\*</sup>

There was also the question of mal-administration and gross misrule. Shielded by the British power in India and made perfectly secure against external encroachment and

\* "The Indian States and Indian Federation".

internal rising, it would have been surprising if the common Ruler had not gone the way of despot.

The princes were subject to few internal checks, and as a result their states with a few honourable exceptions became notorious for mis-government. 'This was a natural consequence of divorcing power from responsibility and of converting the princes into subsidiary allies of the British.\*' When all incentive for good government was removed and premium was placed on indolence, nothing else could have happened. The pity is that some of them not only pursued pleasure as their sole and whole-time occupation but also began to look upon their states as personal property. With few exceptions, the general tone of administration deteriorated. The deterioration in some cases was indeed so marked that even the protectors had to step in and depose the ruler. This happened in the case of Baroda (1875) whose Ruler, Malhar Rao was deposed 'on the grounds of notorious misconduct, gross mis-management of the state and incapacity to carry the suggested reforms into effect.' In 1891 the Yuvraj of Manipur had to be punished. He was deposed, arrested and sentenced to death on the charge of murdering the Chief Commissioner of Assam. The Maharajas of Indore and Nabha were similarly removed from the gadi in 1926 and 1925 respectively.

Whatever the Princes might have thought of these depositions, they derived not inconsiderable satisfaction from the fact that the future of the ruling houses was now secure and that whatever else it might do the paramount power would not annex their territories. Nevertheless, the Princes began to nurse grievances, for they thought the paramount power did not strain at flagrant interference in the internal affairs of their states. The paramount power, on the other hand, far from being apologetic declared emphatically that

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\* Frank Moraes—India Today. p. 60

it was the inalienable right of the British Crown to take action against a Ruler if in its view he was unable to manage his state. We have it on the testimony of Lord Curzon who, recalling his experiences in India as Viceroy says, " but in the last resort, in cases of misdemeanour or crime, the Viceroy retains on behalf of the paramount power the inalienable prerogative of deposition, though it is only with extreme reluctance and after the fullest enquiry and consultation with the Secretary of State that he would decide to exercise it "

## States : Paramount Power

The entire paraphernalia of authority so far as the states were concerned came to be known as Paramountcy which included the Governor-General, the Political Department and the Residents and Agents appointed by it. The Paramountcy was at once the bane and the main prop of the states. It was a bane because the princes got fed up with the vagaries of the Political Department ; it was their main prop because but for the bayonets of the Paramount Power, the states would have tumbled down much sooner than they did. They would have gone the way that all the despotisms of the world have gone.

Paramountcy was a concept which grew with the times. Its connotation was largely governed by the conditions obtaining in the country and the changing policies and requirements of British imperialism. The fact is that British imperialist policy gave it a flexibility which ever defied a precise definition. Successive Governor-Generals and Viceroys put on it their own interpretations while projecting the views of the British Government. The one idea that runs like a common link in all these interpretations is that British authority in India must be treated as paramount and supreme in all cases

and in all conditions irrespective of the treaties and any stipulations made therein. The official seal of approval on this interpretation was put by the Harcourt Butler Committee which in all earnestness and conscience defined paramountcy as 'that which is always paramount'

In the light of the actual developments during the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th century, it appears surprising that the princes took so long to understand the mind of the British rulers in India. They glibly went on talking for decades about the treaties entered into between the East India Company and their own ancestors. The final curtain was rung only by Lord Reading's letter\* to the Nizam of Hyderabad and the report of the Butler Committee.

Even if it was true that the princes were not disloyal to the British Crown, it would be equally correct to say that very few of them had smooth dealings with the officials of the Political Department. Whenever the slightest difference of opinion over any matter of importance arose between state authorities and the officials of the Political Department the former had to yield invariably. The position of the states was such and their dependence on the good books of the Political Department so complete, that a protest to the Crown Representative was mostly out of the question. It was perhaps for this reason that a well known prince who was very intimate with the late Pandit Motilal Nehru, once told the latter during the second civil disobedience movement that for the princes there was not much to choose between the Congress and the Political Department.

The powers which the Viceroy as Crown Representative had and exercised over the states were too extensive to be accurately defined. The jurisdiction of the paramountcy was

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\* See page

too vast to recognise any limitations Paramountcy had been described by Sir William Lee-Warner as the 'extraordinary jurisdiction' of the Governors of India. Says he :

"The so-called extraordinary jurisdiction does not pretend to be based on right or delegation ; it rests upon an act of state and defies jural analysis. In such cases the Government of India interferes with authority by virtue of its paramount powers, and it does not cloak its intervention, or weaken its authority by straining legalities or misapplying legal phrases which were devised for a totally different set of conditions.

"It must then be admitted", continues Lee-Warner, "that the case against a right of interference by the Supreme Government in internal affairs of the native states, as based exclusively on the text of their treaties, is somewhat weakened when other clauses of the same documents are looked at, when communications formally made to them are examined, and when the interpretation of particular articles is tested by practice and by the corresponding articles of other treaties."\*

Lee-Warner does not stop here. Explaining the *raison d'être* of the "extra-ordinary jurisdiction", he goes on ;

"They (the princes) will save themselves from interference if they recognise their obligations for the preservation of their sovereignties against dismemberment, and for the promotion of good government and religious toleration, *which the King's Government has undertaken*. There are other interests to be considered besides those of the states and their subjects. The British Government has a strong and indefinable obligation to promote the moral and material welfare of 232 millions of British subjects."\*\*

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\* "Treaties and Sanads"...

\*\* Ibid.



This should give an insight into the jurisdiction of the Paramount Power over the states. Besides being in full control of the foreign policy, defence and inter-state relations, the Paramountcy had also a right to interfere in the internal affairs of these states. And though the history of the native states' relations with the British extended beyond 160 years, there had never been on record definite rules or principles to govern the conduct of the Paramountcy towards states. At best there had been only some vague rules, unenunciated and unelaborated, which were elastic enough to admit of different interpretations. That is exactly what Lee-Warner meant by an 'indefinable jurisdiction' of the Paramountcy over states. The custodians of the Political Department, almost wholly manned by Englishmen, were the sole interpreters of these rules according to the requirements of British, mis-called British Indian, interest.

This raises another important question; that of the real status of states *vis-a-vis* the Paramount Power. Though there were written treaties and engagements to govern the mutual relations between these two parties, sharp differences in interpretation of certain provisions had manifested themselves only too frequently. Ever since the revolt of 1857, the princes had been highly apprehensive, even suspicious, about the policy of the Paramount Power towards them, even though the Queen's Proclamation had held out assurances of non-interference and continuity of succession to the gaddi to every ruling house. The fact of non-annexation of states as a matter of policy had no doubt carried conviction with the rulers, but it was in respect of other matters following the consolidation of the Indian Empire by the British that the princes had begun to feel that their interests were considered by the Paramount Power only of secondary importance. It was, however, only after the creation of the Princes' Chamber that some of them came out with their inner feelings and

began to express in public what they had for decades nursed in their breasts.

The princes thought that their economic and political interests were not being properly safeguarded. So far as economic interests were concerned, they wanted a revision and re-examination of the existing financial and economic relations between British India and the states. With regard to political interests, they wanted two things ; firstly, a clarification of their position *vis-a-vis* the Paramountcy by an unambiguous definition of the latter, and an enunciation of the specific functions and duties of the Political Department. Secondly, in view of persistent political agitation in British India, they desired that "without their own agreement, the rights and obligations of the Paramount Power should not be assigned to persons who are not under its control, for instance, an Indian government in British India responsible to an Indian legislature."

In response to the princes' wishes, an official committee was appointed in 1927 to report on Indian states. The Chairman of the Committee was Sir Harcourt Butler after whom the Committee takes its name. The Committee visited all the major states and recorded evidence in India and then proceeded to England where it recorded evidence of counsels of the princes. A band of distinguished lawyers and constitutionalists, headed by Sir Leslie Scott, represented the princes and put their case before the Committee. As this was the last-ditch fight for a clearer and, from the princes' point of view, a less arbitrary definition of Paramountcy, the main contentions made by them are of the utmost importance. Some of the claims made on behalf of the princes were :—

1. The Indian states possessed all original sovereign powers, except in so far as they had been transferred to the Crown.

2. In the analysis of the relationship between the states and the Crown, legal principles must be enunciated and applied. This relationship, it was argued, rested on treaties or other formal engagements.

3. The relationship was between the states on the one hand and the British Crown on the other. The rights and obligations of the British Crown, it was contended, were of such a nature that they could not be assigned to or performed by persons who were not under its control.

The Butler Committee could agree only with the last proposition. They admitted and recommended that "Princes should not be handed over without their agreement to a new government in India responsible to Indian legislature." With other contentions of the counsel, the Committee could not wholly agree. "The relationship", they held, "of the Paramount Power with the states is not a mere contractual relationship, resting on treaties made more than a century ago. It is a living, growing relationship shaped by circumstances and policy resting, as Professor Westlake has said, on a mixture of history, theory and modern fact. The novel theory of a paramountcy agreement, limited as in the legal opinion, is unsupported by evidence, is thoroughly undermined by the long list of grievances placed before us which admit a paramountcy extending beyond the sphere of any such agreement, and in case can only rest upon the doctrine, which the learned authors of the opinion rightly condemn, that the treaties must be read as a whole. It is not in accordance with the historical fact that when the Indian states came into contact with the British Power they were independent, each possessed of full sovereignty and of a status which a modern international lawyer would hold to be governed by the rules of international law. In fact none of the states ever held international status. Nearly all of them were subordinate or tributary to the Mughal empire,

the Maharatha supremacy or the Sikh kingdom, and dependent on them. Some were rescued, others were created, by the British."\*

As for the paramountcy, after citing a number of cases, the Report said: "These are some of the incidents and illustrations of paramountcy. We have endeavoured as others before us have endeavoured, to find some formula which will cover the exercise of paramountcy, and we have failed, as others before us have failed to do so. The reason for such failure is not far to seek. Conditions alter rapidly in a changing world. Imperial necessity and new conditions may at any time raise unexpected situations. Paramountcy must remain paramount; it must fulfil its obligations defining or adapting itself according to the shifting necessities of the time and progressive development of states. Nor need the states take alarm at this conclusion."\*\*

It will leave one in no doubt as to the status the states had enjoyed ever since the advent of the British in India. Despite the written treaties and periodical assurances the states had always been held as strictly subordinate either to the Government of the East India Company or its successor, the Government of India. In all official documents and records the phrase 'British dominion in India' stands both for British India and the native states. Almost every Governor-General of India since the "Mutiny" could be quoted in support of this view. Lord Canning being the first Viceroy after the 1857 upheaval, his views must be regarded as of special significance on this issue. In 1860 he declared; "The Crown of England stands as the unquestioned ruler and paramount in all India, and there was a reality in the suzerainty of England which never existed before and which was eagerly acknowledged by the Chiefs." Lord Canning further

\* Butler Committee's Report,—

\*\* Ibid

declared that "the territories under the suzerainty of the Crown became at once as important and as integral a part of India as its direct dominion."

Even the biggest of Indian states was subordinate to the Paramount Power, treaties of "equal and absolute rule" notwithstanding. As late as 1926, Lord Reading wrote to the Nizam of Hyderabad while dis-abusing his mind in respect to the latter's demand for arbitration in the dispute relating to Berar. In his reply the Viceroy wrote :

"In the paragraphs which I have mentioned, you state and develop the position that in respect of the internal affairs of Hyderabad, you, as Ruler of the Hyderabad state, stand on the same footing as the British Government in India in respect of the internal affairs of British India. Lest, I should be thought to overstate your claims, I quote your Exalted Highness's own words: 'Save and except matters relating to foreign powers and policies, the Nizams of Hyderabad have been independent in the internal affairs of their state, just as much as the British Government in British India. With the reservation mentioned by me, the parties have on all occasions acted with complete freedom and independence in all inter-Governmental questions that naturally arise from time to time between neighbours. Now the Berar question is not and cannot be covered by that reservation. No foreign power or policy is concerned or involved in its examination, and thus the subject comes to be a controversy between the two Governments that stand on the same place without any limitations of subordination of one to the other.'

"These words would seem to be a misconception of Your Exalted Highness's relations to the Paramount Power, which it is incumbent on me as His Imperial Majesty's representative to remove, since my silence on such a subject now might hereafter be interpreted as acquiescence in the propositions which you have enunciated.

"The sovereignty of the British Crown is supreme in India, and therefore no ruler of an Indian state can justifiably claim to negotiate with the British Government on an equal footing. Its supremacy is not based only upon treaties and engagements, but exists independently of them and, quite apart from its prerogative in matters relating to foreign powers and policies, it is the right and duty of the British Government, while scrupulously respecting all treaties and engagements with the Indian states, to preserve peace and good order throughout India."\*

It is impossible to think of a clearer and more unequivocal declaration from a Head of Government. There is no wonder if this reply to Hyderabad was considered by all as the final and conclusive argument against the claim of internal independence or sovereignty by states. Once for all this declaration settled the question of political and constitutional status of Indian states *vis-a-vis* the Paramount Power. If even Hyderabad, the biggest and by far the most important state in India could not claim immunity from interference in internal affairs by the paramountcy, the claims of other states none of which was half as big in size, men and resources as Hyderabad (Kashmir excepted) were automatically answered. No state, big or small, could negotiate with the Paramount Power on a footing of equality. Even when a state did negotiate as a party with inferior states, the Paramount Power was the sole judge and arbiter as to the final decision to be taken to settle a dispute. There was no authority to check or supervise its conduct or to question its judgement. "The Paramount Power was itself", says Sir Sidney Low, "the judge of what it could do or could not do. It decided what it liked and its decisions were regarded as statement of the law which would override or cancel contractual obligations."

If there was serious difference of opinion or even a respectful protest from a state against a decision of the Paramount Power, the latter never felt perturbed in the least and went about its work as usual as if nothing had happened. When the states jointly protested against what they called paramountcy's indifference towards their interests and demanded a definition of the functions of paramountcy as they did in the twenties, we have seen what reply they got from the Butler Committee.

This narration of facts is not intended to show that the paramountcy had been necessarily unjust to the states. Nor is it sought to be made out that the states had all along been *innocent victims of highhandedness*. Far from being unjust or manifestly high handed, the paramountcy had done all it could to entrench native chiefs on Indian soil as firmly as possible. They owed it to the paramountcy and to it alone that their dynastic rule went on uninterrupted from decade to decade, from generation to generation. On the whole it had given them concessions to the extent of placating them.

If in spite of the best intentions of the paramountcy and some of the clear provisions of treaties, it had failed to oblige the native chiefs, this only showed the prowess of the inexorable hand of time. Gone were the days when states could be treated as "equals" in "some respects". Gone also were the days when their boundaries could be considered as strictly sacrosanct. When these hopes were raised and assurances made, India was no better than a military camp providing limitless game to any freebooter. Corporate life, *though existent in minute villages and communities*, was unknown on a wider scale. National unity was then, perhaps, a dream which only a diseased brain could have secreted. Means of transport and communication were few and, judged from modern standards, surprisingly slow. The times were, indeed, ideal for carving out kingdoms and hacking the way

to power and principedom. Most of these states were remnants of the successes of a plucky soldier here and a master of horse there. What might have been supposed to be true then, could not obviously hold good now.

A hundred years of peace and integrated administration had changed the shape of things. A sort of unity, howsoever loose, was imposed on India by a century of British rule. Distances were conquered and the time factor in travel well nigh obliterated. From Kashmir to Cape Comorin, from Kathiawar to Manipur, India became one country, easily coverable within less than a week. The railways and posts and telegraphs killed the sense of seclusion and exposed every part of India to the full gaze of its neighbours.

That the attitude of the Paramount Power towards the states changed with the times is proved by the Treaty of Rendition with Mysore. In this Treaty according to which Mysore was returned to the Maharaja, provisions were incorporated which had a peculiar applicability to the circumstances then obtaining. "It signified the developments in the field of political relations between the two parties, the Government of India and the Indian states, till that time, and as such was regarded of general application to all the states, irrespective of the treaties howsoever different in character, made with them."\*

This treaty provided that the Maharaja would administer Mysore state "under such restrictions and conditions as may be necessary for ensuring the maintenance of the system of administration". Further the Maharaja was to enjoy that position only "as long as he and his heirs fulfil the conditions hereinafter prescribed."

This was a clear enough indication of the changing

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\* Bisheshwar Prasad in his Introduction to "Paramountcy under Dalhousie" by S. N. Prasad.



political climate in the country. The princes could have hardly failed to catch the hint and take note of the change.

When the rails were laid and telegraphic posts erected it was impossible to leave out the native territories unlinked with the rest of the country. It was in the interest of the states also but even if it was not considered so by them it had got to be done because the interests of India as a whole demanded it. Some states made a grievance of it, but such a grievance was of a piece with the one that they were not being treated as equal allies despite a provision in some treaties to this effect. Experience had shown that these 'equal allies' were not recognised as equals such recognition being incompatible with the good of the country as a whole.

Therefore, the paramountcy though it had ever been anxious to preserve the Indian princes gave in certain cases precedence to all India interests. Whenever national or all-India interests clashed with those of a state the former were invariably given priority over the latter.

Open to criticism on many counts though the British rule in India was it must be acknowledged that even while protecting their own interests the British administrators were not always motivated by considerations of narrow imperialism. They consciously fostered the unity of India and gave concrete shape to this idea in regard to certain important matters like communications transport and trade. There is no doubt that British imperial interests were always kept paramount in the decisions of the Political Department on disputes raised by the princes but there is sufficient evidence to prove that when the good of India as a whole was not in conflict with those interests, the Paramount Power normally acted in a manner more conducive to Indian unity than to pampering of the states rulers.

It is, therefore, at best a moot point whether the British power in India was always motivated by only one consideration, namely, placating the princes to any limit in order to perpetuate British rule in India. The history of constitutional reforms in India as also a comparative study of colonial rule in other countries of Asia and Africa would militate against the assumption that the Paramount Power was obsessed by the idea of always preferring the interests of the princes to the good of India as a whole.

## Treaties and states People

The provisions of the treaties and engagements that subsisted between the Paramount Power (formerly the East India Company) and the Indian states were not in all cases similar in minute details. That is because the offensive and defensive alliances, as most of these treaties were when entered into, were governed by the peculiar nature of circumstances in each case. Though the details of the terms of provisions differed widely in different cases, all treaties had two main common features :

1. Offensive and defensive alliance, making mutual military aid obligatory in the case of either party being involved in a war with a third party.

2. Guarantee of protection to states against internal rebellion or rising on two conditions, viz, their loyalty to the British and reasonably good management of their governments

One may wade through the whole of Aitchison's collection without discovering a single treaty or engagement wherein the guarantee of protection against external dangers and internal revolts in states is not made conditional to "good government" in the state. Every treaty contains a

provision, explicit or implicit, to this effect. In fact, while guaranteeing protection to a native chief, as much emphasis is laid on the chief's loyalty to the British as on the prevalence of good government in the state. Indeed it is not without significance that these treaties were originally made between officers of the East India Company and the princes "not in their individual capacities, but as constitutional heads of their states". It had been made explicit beyond a shadow of doubt that the word 'state' would also include the people inhabiting it.

It would be incorrect to say that the treaties were contracts between the native chiefs and the Paramount Power and that the states people did not come in the picture at all. A perusal of the text of treaties will clearly show that such an interpretation is not only disavowed by the provisions of the treaties, but is wholly contrary to their spirit. On the other hand when they are studied collectively, the conclusion irresistibly forces itself on one's mind that these treaties were as much of potent guarantees against misrule within the state boundaries as guarantees against external aggression or internal insurgence. All that was guaranteed to a native chief in exclusion was his integrity and continuance of his dyanastic rule. But, as stated above, even this guarantee was not unconditional. The two conditions, *inter alia*, were that the chief would remain loyal to the British and that he would maintain good and efficient government within his state. These two conditions had come to be judged and interpreted by multifarious rules and practices backed by 'practical usage' that extended over 150 years.

It may be admitted that in providing in a treaty for efficient government in a state, the East India Company officers were not necessarily moved by any altruistic motives. The main reason, perhaps, why they insisted on seeing a protected state well-governed and inhabited by contented

people was that there existed no barrier or natural boundary as such to divide the native states from territories under the direct rule of the Company. They realised the essential unity of India and had the wisdom to foresee that a bad government and chaotic conditions in a body-politic are attributes far more infectious than any disease.

As subsequent history of the relations between the East India Company and states shows, these provisions in the treaties were no mere decorations. They were freely invoked by the officers of the Company whenever the occasion arose. We find numerous instances of interference in the affairs of the states either because, in the opinion of the Company's officers the chiefs had proved themselves to be disloyal to the British or were guilty of gross misrule. The technique which the British followed was this. In the first instance the officers of the Company would warn the chief whom they suspected to be guilty of misrule and inefficient administration. They would also make concrete suggestions as to the reforms for the welfare of the subjects. If successive warnings went unheeded and produced no appreciable effect on the mind of the chief, war was declared on him as a last alternative, and in certain cases the vanquished chief's territory was annexed. Coorg was a typical instance of the case in view. In this state misrule and corruption were prevalent to an extent difficult to surpass. After several warnings, the Company charged the ruler with "a gross outrage upon the established rules of all civilised nations, by whom the persons of accredited agents are invariably held sacred." To this, it is said, the Raja replied by "letters replete with the most insulting expressions". Finally, therefore, the Governor-General declared war on Coorg and subsequently the state was annexed.

The case of Coorg, in this connection, acquired a special significance. Here clearly one and only one issue was invol-

ved—that of misgovernance. As Lee-Warner, says "In dealing with the state of Coorg, the British Government had no other objective in view than to 'secure to the inhabitants of Coorg the blessings of a just and equitable government'."

Similarly when the British dominion was extended, "deliverance of millions from the quagmire of anarchy of misrule" was always put forward as one of the excuses. It may be stated here that absolute non-interference was enjoined on the British Government in India by the declaration of the British Parliament made in Pitt's India Act (1784) and repeated in 1793. It laid down that "to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour and the policy of this nation."<sup>\*</sup> But despite this declaration and the keen desire of most of the Governor-Generals to act up to its letter and spirit, the Company's dominion in India never remained static for one decade. The one justification that was always considered potent enough to override the dictates of this declaration and possibly to give a quietus to a scrupulous Governor-General's qualms of conscience, was the grandiloquent plea to rid millions of sufferers from the tyranny of misgovernance. Coorg, as we have already seen, was annexed on this plea. For the same reason the Ruler of Oudh was pensioned off in 1856 and Oudh annexed. Again, on the same plea Lord William Bentinck had previously pensioned off the Raja of Mysore in 1831. And none of the historians has found it difficult to vindicate Bentinck's action as 'his motive was always hatred of misgovernment, not extension of British influence or acquisition of territory'.<sup>\*</sup>

Even the annexation of Sind, admittedly one of the most outrageous and indefensible acts the Company's officers

<sup>\*</sup> Rolerts—"History of British India"

<sup>\*</sup> *Ibid.*

ever perpetrated in India, was sought to be defended on this very plea. In his *Diary*, Sir Charles Napier, the Conqueror of Sind, had made some plain admission. About Sind he wrote "We have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, human piece of rascality it will be." He called it humane because the government of the Amirs of Sind was utterly weak and inefficient and the populace were regular victims of oppressions at the hands of corrupt officials. As Roberts remarks, "Sir Charles Napier conscientiously believed that British administration would confer incalculable blessings on the country and was really indifferent how many legal, technical, and even moral considerations he swept away in benefiting the people of Sind against their will."\*

The force of this plea has also been admitted by Lee-Warner who says, "Two main objects of imperial concern have been put forward by Governor Generals of India to justify their extension of British dominion—the protection of the empire against invasion and the better government of the people."

Whatever the legal merits or demerits of the annexation of Sind by Napier, the people of Sind ever afterwards regarded it as a stroke of good fortune. It was no doubt a veritable deliverance that annexation and subsequent British administration conferred on the people of Sind.

### After 1857

So far we have only dealt with the policy that held good and the conditions that prevailed in India before the "Mutiny". We shall now turn to the policy of the Government of India, as it had begun to be called after the liquidation of the East India Company in 1858, and see what changes, if any, the passing of the Indian empire directly under the

\* History of British India"

control of the British Crown, brought in its wake and how those changes affected the relations that subsisted between the Government of India and the Princes on the one hand, and the Government of India and the states subjects on the other.

With the passing of the Government of India from the control of the East India Company to that of the British Crown, a perceptible change in the relations of the Crown with Indian princes crept in. Before the sepoy rising, the British were, at least in theory, one of the powers in India. Now after the rebellion they became the paramount power in India, all other powers being strictly subordinate to it. A new era of co-operation thus began between the British and the native princes. The British foothold on Indian soil was now too firm for them to fear any native power. Thus the former policy of "subordinate isolation" gave place to the policy of "subordinate union" between the Paramount Power and the princes. This having been established, the first important change that took place in this direction was marked by Queen Victoria's declaration which disclaimed all desire to extend British territory in India, and promised to respect "the rights, dignity and honour" of Indian princes. Annexation as an instrument of policy was thus definitely given up and the apprehensions that Lord Dalhousie's policy of lapse or escheat has roused in them, were cleared once for all.

Apart from the assurance that the Royal Declaration gave to the princes, the change embodied in it did not affect the Paramount Power's obligations towards the people of the states. If anything, these obligations were now underlined and had acquired greater significance. Indeed the emphasis on good government in states was exactly in proportion to the security that was now conferred upon their rulers. "Henceforward", says Roberts, "with the integrity of their



territories guaranteed and the coveted right of adoption conceded, they had no need to fear incorporation in British dominion through the natural decay of their dynasties. Thus their relations with their suzerain entered on a new phase. They were brought into closer connection partly by the confidence sprung from their now more assured position and partly by the material links of railways, canals, posts and telegraphs. The supreme government became at once more sensitive to *maladministration in a native state and more loth to impair the position of Indian princes* \* \*

It is thus clear that on its own admission, the Paramount Power's obligations to safeguard the interests of the state subjects by providing efficient administration in states, became doubly binding on them as a natural sequel to the absolute guarantee of security granted by it to the princes. The power which robbed the people of their natural right of armed revolt against a prince's aggression and injustice, did not fail to see the implication of its action. Sir George Macmunn who had intimate knowledge of administration in states, fully agrees with this view. Says he :

"Lest anyone should be induced to believe that such demands by the Paramount Power are vexatious and uncalled for or a breach of treaty, it should be remembered in untrammelled Eastern countries the remedy against unbearable despotism is mutiny, rebellion or palace murder. Against these facts the strong hand of Britain guarantees the incumbents of the princes' thrones. Since the easement of the East is denied to the persecuted, it is absolutely incumbent on the Paramount Power to see justice done, and this too at times with a strong hand" \*\*\*

The Paramount Power's policy towards the states,

\* "History of British India"

\* "The Indian States and Princes" p 158

therefore, envisaged interference in their internal affairs to secure good government for the subjects. As we shall see in what follows the Paramount Power had not only to interfere in affairs of certain states to secure efficient administration, but in some cases it was obliged even to depose rulers after their trial before a judicial tribunal.

Emphasis has been laid on two main events as illustrating the general policy of the Paramount Power in combating misrule and maladministration in a native territory. The most important, and from our point of view also the most significant, was the case of Baroda. The other case is that of Manipur. We shall take up these cases one by one.

### The Baroda Case

Malhar Rao who ascended the throne in 1870 proved to be an incapable ruler, and soon became famous for his misrule and evil influence. The people of Baroda raised their voice of protest against oppression and corruption that were rampant in every department of the state. Very serious allegations were made against the Gaekwar. Seeing that serious trouble was brewing up there, the Government of India appointed a commission of enquiry to report on the facts. The Gaekwar protested against this interference in the internal affairs of the state. In reply to his protest, the Viceroy and the Governor-General wrote a remarkably clear letter elucidating all the points at issue. It throws a flood of light on the theory of intervention and brings in clearly the rights and obligations of the Paramount Power vis-a-vis the rights of the states subjects.

The Viceroy wrote as follows:

"This intervention although amply justified by the language of treaties, rests also on other foundations. Your Highness has just observed that 'the British Government is undoubtedly the Paramount Power in India, and the existence

and prosperity of native states depend upon its fostering favour and benign protection'. This is especially true of the Baroda state, both because of its geographical position intermixed with British territory, and also because a subsidiary force of British troops is maintained for the defence of the state, for the protection of the person of its ruler and the enforcement of his legitimate authority.

"My friend, I cannot consent to employ British troops to protect anyone in a course of wrong doing. Misrule on the part of a government which is upheld by the British power is misrule in the responsibility for which the British Government becomes in a measure involved. It becomes, therefore, not only the right but the positive duty of the British Government to see that the administration of a state in such a condition is reformed, and that gross abuses are removed.

"It has never been the wish of the British Government to interfere in the details of the Baroda administration, nor is it my desire to do so now. The immediate responsibility for the Government of the state rests, and must continue to rest, upon the Gaekwar for the time being. He has been acknowledged as the sovereign of Baroda, and he is responsible for exercising his sovereign powers with proper regard to his duties and obligations alike to the British Government and to his subjects. If these obligations be not fulfilled, if gross misgovernment be permitted, if substantial justice be not done to the subjects of the Baroda state, if life and property be not protected, or if the general welfare of the country and the people be persistently neglected, the British Government will assuredly intervene in the manner which in its judgement may be best calculated to remove these evils and to secure good government. Such timely intervention, indeed, to prevent misgovernment culminating in the ruin of the state is no less an act of friendship to the Gaekwar himself than a duty to his subjects."

Such an unequivocal statement of the position from the head of the British Government in India requires no comment. It lays to rest all doubts as to the statutory obligations and moral duty of the Paramount Power in the event of misgovernment in an Indian state. The statement also reiterates in clearest possible terms the obligations that the Paramount Power owes to the people of the states.

More than fifty years later, the Butler Committee felt obliged to reiterate the official position with regard to the old question of interference in the internal affairs of states. The findings of the Committee on this question of Paramount Power's obligations towards states people are almost similar and fully in consonance with the above view. The Committee wrote:

"The duty of the Paramount Power to protect the states against rebellion and insurrection is derived from the clauses of treaties and sanads, from usage and from the promise of the King Emperor to maintain unimpaired the privileges, rights and dignities of the princes. This duty imposes on the Paramount Power correlative obligations in cases where its intervention is asked for or has become necessary. The guarantee to protect a prince against insurrection carries with it an obligation to inquire into the causes of the insurrection and to demand that the prince shall remedy legitimate grievances, and an obligation to prescribe the necessary remedy to this result."<sup>\*</sup>

It is worth while to give here the views of Sir John Malcom than whom no other officer concluded larger number of treaties with Indian princes and than whom no one could speak with greater personal knowledge, experience or authority. Sir John was a strong advocate of the policy of non-intervention. Writing in 1822, he said :

\* Butler Committee's Report.—para 4§

"If compelled by circumstances to depart from this course, it is wiser to assume and exercise the immediate sovereignty of the country, than leave to such mock and degraded instruments any means of avenging themselves on a power which has rendered them debased tools of its own misgovernment. Those who are supporters of a system that leaves a state, which our overshadowing friendship has lit out from sunshine of that splendour which once gave almost to its vices, to die by its own hand—to perish, unaided by us amid the distraction which has been produced by our internal administration consequent on our alliance—can have no rational argument but that the speediest death of such governments is the best because it brings them soonest to the point at which we can (on grounds that will be admitted as legitimate both in India and England) assume the country, and give it the benefits of our rule "

Almost to the same effect was the declaration of Lord Hastings who said that if the rulers, after repeated warnings, could not govern decently, the subjects must be "freed from Native rule "

### The Manipur Case

In 1891 violent disputes occurred in the Manipur state which led to the abdication of the Maharaja. Mr Quinton, Chief Commissioner of Assam, was instructed to proceed to Manipur in order to bring about a settlement of the disputes. On arrival he and four British officers who were with him were treacherously made prisoners and forthwith beheaded under the orders of the Senapati or General (the brother of the Maharaja) and of the Prime Minister of the state. An expedition was at once sent into Manipur to avenge the outrage. Those responsible were arrested, tried and executed. In the course of the trial the counsel for the accused urged that the state of Manipur was independent and that

its rulers were not liable to be tried for waging war against the Queen Empress.

The Government of India, after fully considering the whole case, once again clarified the issue of relationship between the Paramount Power and the native states. The Governor-General in Council issued a resolution on the subject explaining the real place and rank of states in India. The resolution said :

".....The degree of subordination in which the Manipur state stood towards the Indian Empire has been more than once explained in connection with these cases; and it must be taken to be proved conclusively that Manipur was a subordinate and protected state which owed submission to the Paramount Power..... The principles of international law have no bearing upon the relations between the Government of India as representing the Queen Empress on the one hand, and the native states under the suzerainty of Her Majesty on the other. The paramount supremacy of the former presupposes and implies the subordination of the latter....."

Now though this case throws no light on the question of the rights of states subjects, it certainly brings forth in a most unambiguous manner the actual degree of "sovereignty" which states in India possessed and could lay claim to. Their ultimate subordination to the Paramount Power in all matters, internal or external, was established beyond any doubt. Constitutionally and legally nothing could prevent the Paramount Power from active interference in affairs of a state in face of the least signs of discontent or misrule within its borders. Rather, if it failed to intervene or connived at misrule and maladministration, it clearly laid itself open to the charge of wilful negligence and abetting crime.

This is no far-fetched interpretation of the obligations which the Paramount Power owed to the teeming millions

inhabiting the native states This is the exact interpretation which had been put on the treaties by several highly-placed government officials Among them Lord Minto's interpretation is by far the most authentic as it is entirely in consonance with facts of history Lord Minto made an important announcement at Udaipur on 3rd November, 1909, in the course of which His Excellency said

"Our policy is, with rare exceptions, one of non-interference in the internal affairs of native states But in guaranteeing their internal independence and in undertaking their protection against external aggression, it naturally follows that the Imperial Government has assumed a certain degree of responsibility for the general soundness of their administration and would not consent to incur the reproach of being an indirect instrument of misrule \*

Before Lord Minto, the same note of warning was sounded by Lord Canning, who while speaking in a state capital made it clear that "removal of the dread of annexation by a guarantee of adoption was not to be made an excuse for insubordination or misrule "

Again, in their report on Indian constitutional reforms, Mr Montagu and Lord Chelmsford thus described the position of the states

"The states are guaranteed security from without, the Paramount Power acts for them in relation to foreign powers and other states, and it intervenes when the internal peace of their territories is seriously threatened. On the other hand the states' relations to foreign powers are those of the Paramount Power, they share the obligations for common defence, and they are under a general responsibility for a good government and welfare of their territories "

Since the dawn of the reform era in British provinces in 1909 and the agitation in the states for parallel measures,

\* Speeches of Lord Minto Vol I,

the principal argument of the rulers and their governments against the grant of responsible governments to their people was based on so-called treaty provisions. It suited them to interpret treaties in a manner as if they prevented the state administrations from being responsible to the people. The rulers, it was claimed, had to retain all power in their own hands in order to discharge their obligations to the Paramount Power in terms of the treaties subsisting between them and the British power in India. Particularly since 1937 when provincial autonomy was granted according to the Government of India Act, 1935, and the states people's agitation against autocratic rule gathered momentum, it became a fashion for the rulers and their ministers to raise the bogey of treaties against meeting the popular demand for vesting administrative powers in the hands of the people. A statesman and constitutionalist of Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer's repute, for example, publicly declared in 1939 that complete responsible government in states "was for times an impossibility since such a step would involve a breach of the treaties between the princes and the Paramount Power." The Nawab of Bahawalpur and several other princes proffered this very plea in order to reject their people's demand for responsible government. Indeed the situation became so alarming on the eve of the last world war that the Secretary of State for India had to say in a public statement that other factors being favourable there was no inherent incompatibility between the provisions of the treaties and the grant of responsible government to the people of the states.

It is amazing that the princes and their spokesmen did not heed even what the Indian States Enquiry Committee had said about treaties only a decade earlier. Referring to the treaties, the Committee had pointed out :

"The validity of the treaties and engagements made



with the princes and the maintenance of their rights, privileges and dignities have been both asserted and observed by the Paramount Power. But the Paramount Power has had of necessity to make decisions and exercise the functions of paramouncy beyond the terms of the treaties in accordance with changing political social and economic conditions. The process commenced almost as soon as the treaties were made' \*

The same view is expressed at various places in the pages of 'The Protected Princes of India'. Lee Warner clearly lays more emphasis on 'custom and usage' than on treaties as sources from which rules governing British relations with native states could be drawn. He goes so far as to declare 'The decisions of the British Courts of Law interpret and affect the provisions of Acts of Parliament, and by a similar process, the judgements of the British Government upon the issues raised by its dealings with the native states test the treaties by the touchstone of practical application'.

Such was the verdict on the import and worth of treaties of statesmen and chroniclers whom even their worst enemies cannot accuse of bias against the native states or their rulers. Both Lee Warner and the Butler Committee agree that treaties and engagements were the result of mutual adjustment between the East India Company and the native chiefs in the peculiar circumstances that prevailed in the latter half of the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries, and that the provisions of those treaties need not necessarily in their fullness hold good for all times. As stated already, all those peculiarities which characterised that period of Indian history were now a thing of the past. Those circumstances and conditions had altogether disappeared and the status of both parties to the treaties had undergone a radical change. The Paramount Power, successor of the East India Company, no more thought of any native state in terms of offensive or defensive alliance,

\* Butler Committee's Report

for the very motive of self-defence, under the stress of modern conditions had got transformed into that of self-assertion and unification. This will be borne out by Government's own policy during the last fifty years of British rule. In fact persistent adherence to this policy of unification by the Political Department is what constituted the gravamen of the prince's grievances against the Paramount Power, as made out by A. P. Nicholson in his "Scraps of Papers" and Sir L. Scott and his colleagues. Similarly the reasons that led the British in the past to propound and follow the policy of 'ring fence' and limited liability did not hold good today. In the circumstances it was only logical to conclude that the treaties and engagements made in that period of history were not considered applicable without necessary modifications to a politically conscious and freedom-aspiring India.

In sum, the treaties did not really confer upon the princes that status which they presumed belonged to them. Their status, their privileges and the degree of their sovereignty varied with the varying times. They lost or gained as the march of events ordained. Their rights and privileges were not unalterably written once for all in the treaties. The treaties, their makers and the latter's successors themselves fully provided for necessary changes according to circumstances. Lastly, this interpretation of the treaties was further supported by the very liberal construction that the Paramount Power itself put upon them from time to time. Another thing which is equally clear is that the treaties, whatever their provisions, did not leave good government in the states, in terms of the well being of their people, altogether out of account. There was thus some justification for the states people to look to the paramount Power for redress of their just grievances.

## A Cross-Section of States' Administration

We have already said that with a few exceptions, the states did not have anything in the nature of representative institutions comparable with those existent in British India. The general level of administration in an average state was out of tune with the times. It was backward and of an inferior quality as compared to that in the provinces. The states suffered from all the ills that one-man rule can be heir to. In most cases, therefore, the administration was un-responsive, autocratic and crude. In all cases, without one single exception, it was, in the democratic sense, irresponsible.

Mysore, Travancore, Baroda, Hyderabad and Kashmir claimed to have some representative institutions, though in the latter two states franchise was restricted and the Legislative Assemblies so constituted that officials and nominated members dominated the elected elements. The Hyderabad Government flirted for long with the idea of indirect elections and saw the seeds of revolution in the system of direct elections. Things were not far different in Kashmir, where also elected members were in a minority. In Both cases the State Councils were far from being truly representative of the

people of those states. It is only the Legislative Councils existent in Mysore, Travancore and Baroda which could in some sense be compared with the provincial Legislative Councils of the pre-provincial autonomy days.

As for other states, big and small, in them even local-self government institutions were conspicuous by their absence, to say nothing of legislative councils. In the thirties municipal committees were set up in some of them, but in nearly all cases, these bodies were dominated by officials and the element of election was either altogether absent or reduced to a mere formolity. Till 1935; for example, Nabha state in the Punjab with a population of over 3 lakhs could not boast of having one municipal committee. A make-believe kind of body was occasionally conjured up into life as and when the ruler desired some visiting dignitary to be accorded a civic reception or when a state function was organized. Municipalities in such states were no more than formal symbols of prestige and mere pieces of decoration contrived to lend dignity to the rulers and grace to certain public ceremonials.

The main feature of the administration in the states, which was common to them all, was that it was personal and arbitrary in nature. There were, of course, separate departments like education, health, finance, industry, etc., but these were a pale life-less copy of the bureaucratic set-up in the provinces.

A prominent feature of administration in all the states was their too flexible and irregular financial structure. In the absence of independent audit and modern accounts arrangements, the "finance departments" of states functioned almost on the pattern of a landlord's domestic budget. A big chunk of the total revenue was claimed by the ruler as his privy purse, and as we shall see, this amount bore no relation to the

requirements of the people or the needs of administration of the territory concerned. The charge often made by enlightened Indian and British public men that most of the rulers treated their states as if they were their personal properties or family jagirs, was too true to have ever been controverted satisfactorily by any of the princes or their spokesmen. They lived in a style reminiscent of the heroes of the Arabian Nights and the French monarchs of the pre-revolution days. The contrast which the poverty of their people presented along side with the gorgeous splendour of the royal court was looked upon by many a ruler as a thing of beauty to be preserved assiduously as a piece of antiquity. No wonder that they were not prepared to listen to any criticism of their extravagance from any quarter, including the Paramount Power itself.

With every dose of reform in British India, the Political Department issued instructions on behalf of the Paramount Power that the states must introduce a measure of reforms in their administrations. The Chamber of Princes in its annual session re-echoed these sentiments, lending apparently generous but actually feeble support to the Crown Representative's wishes. This formality degenerated into a routine, so much so that its implementation became more imaginary than real. It called for little or no change at all in the existing set-up. For example, the Political Department instructed the states repeatedly to separate the privy purses of the rulers from the state revenue. To comply with these instructions which the princes could not have possibly defied, their privy purses were reported to have been set apart and shown separately. But in the case of most of the states, it was a mere eye-wash. In a big state like Bikaner, for example, the Maharaja's privy purse was fixed at Rs 25 lakhs, which was quite exorbitant, being more than one-fourth of the state's income. Even this was not considered enough. The ruler's requirements made inroads into public revenues so that quite a substantial part

of the amount shown under the head P.W.D. was spent on repairs of the Maharaja's palace, its extension or renovation. Similarly the ruler and his family made goodly dents in the expenditure shown against public health, education etc.

When such was the state of affairs in big states like Bikaner, one can well imagine the conditions prevailing in smaller states. Let us, for example, take Nilgiri in Orissa states. The gross income of the state was Rs. 1,71,000. Out of this Rs. 50,000 was allotted for the maintenance of the ruler. Over and above this, palace charges were debited to the following departments: Forest department for palace gardens and cattle; PWD for palace electricity, theatre electricity, billiard table, theatre opening and zenana garden; Education department for education of junior ranis' relatives; Medical department for palace doctor and other staff and medicine and toilet; Veterinary department for palace stable; police department for palace attendants and palace music and state Guests Department for upkeep of ranis' relatives. These invisible charges combined with the visible Rs. 50,000/- would bring the amount used by the ruler on his personal and family account to more than one half of the total income of the state. Apart from this, there were several other sources of income which were not accounted for in the budget. This was the model or pattern on which budgetary allocations of most of the states were done. The will of the ruler was supreme and his ministers and advisers were invariably accomplices in these practices which they were obliged to abet.

There is little wonder that the glory of the princes' purse had travelled beyond the seas. In Europe, in America, wherever they went they were looked upon as great curioses and wondered at. Their 'riotous rivalry and savage splendour' left a trail of whisper and scandals in every country which they visited. To quote Sir George Macmunn, a former

## Resident in Central India

"The Indian princes themselves are personalities picturesque and feudal who delight the British people on the occasions when they visit Britain, when they play, in all-British teams, and when they join them in the hours of danger. Their jewels, their princesses, their gorgeousness, their hospitality, their devotion to the Crown are all subjects on which the Press of Britain and, on fewer occasions, of the continent, delight to expatiate"\*

The civilized world will feel scandalised to know that there were at least six states in India every one of whose rulers spent anything between Rs 25 and Rs. 40 lakhs yearly on himself. Then there were innumerable small states which had to sacrifice from one third to one-half of their revenues for maintaining their rulers. The much-talked of Rajkot was a typical instance. The total income of Rajkot for four years (1932-36) was Rs. 58, 92, 018. The total state expenses during these four years amounted to Rs. 30, 98, 263. The remaining Rs. 28 lakhs went to constitute the privy purse of the Thakore Sahib, giving an yearly average of Rs. 7 lakhs. But the Thakore Sahib was no solitary ruler of this kind. He had serious rivals, in and outside Kathiawar, in the art of spending public money.

Most of the states claimed that they had set up separate departments and established a system of administration following the model prevalent in British provinces. But the one thing that always tilted the scales against the people was the factor of personal rule to which the people of the states were condemned. It was a kind of autocracy without the advantage of any incentive to improvement, and without any corrective to keep the ship of administration on an even

\* 'The Indian States and Princes', page 72

keel. The guaranteed security of their lineage and protection against internal disorders by the British power in India deprived them of any incentive to improvement, and the inability of the oppressed people to raise their voice effectively against the ruler and his Government further robbed the states of the necessary corrective. In these conditions only a paragon of virtues could have behaved differently; and to that extent one might take a lenient view of the failings of the princes. It is the Paramount Power and the British vested interests which must be called the villain of the piece, for it is they who propped the princes who acted as their stooges. They educated them in exclusive schools and colleges, taking care later on to put them under British tutors and officers for training in official work. When such rulers ascended the gaddi with unfettered powers, their preference for pomp and show and utter indifference to popular welfare and improvement in administration can be easily understood. The rulers themselves made all important appointments, whether of high court judges, civil servants, ministers, advisers or members of public service commissions. All of these people held office at the pleasure of the ruler. The ruler was absolutely free to do whatever he liked to or for them. He had only to see that he kept himself on the right side of officials of the Political Department and this was no problem for him, thanks to his training and his long purse.

The administration, however, was not equally bad in all the states. There were differences of degree though not of kind. There is one generalisation that can be made about all of them, big or small, enlightened or backward. None of them was tolerant of criticism; none of them ever brooked opposition. So, all of them decided to do without a press. Is it not amazing that there was not a single independent paper appearing from any of the states? There was no liberty of the press and no freedom of expression. There was no liberty



of person and no security of property. A mere executive order, oral or in writing was enough to wrest any property from any citizen.

Referring to this aspect of the states administration a memorandum of the All India States People's Conference presented to the Indian States Committee had to say as follows

' Another most important matter is the absence of the Rule of Law in the states, barring a few exceptions. There is no liberty of person in the states, and if a person is put into prison there is no remedy by way of a writ of *Habeas Corpus* against the officers detaining the person concerned in prison. There is no security of property. The state in its corporate capacity cannot be sued in the municipal courts in most of the states '

The people, as we have already pointed out, had no real voice in municipal affairs in places where municipal committees did exist. Everything was decided by an officer of the state working under the guidance of the ruler. So called representative institutions and legislative bodies notwithstanding, the ruler's will was the law. His wish superseded all decisions and opinions expressed by such bodies. It was not only small states like Nabha which gave a short shrift to Jawaharlal Nehru in 1923 but also big and reputedly progressive states like Baroda which were pathetically helpless in face of the ruler's wayward behaviour. A legislative or political deadlock with which the provinces even under the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms were only too familiar, was conceivable in the most progressive state, for, the truth is that in comparison with the head of a state the head of a province stood nowhere.

A typical example of such helplessness is presented by Baroda. Contrary to the law of the land its ruler, Sir Pratap Singh, contracted a second marriage in 1944 by taking the extraordinary step of amending the Baroda law against bigamy by providing that the said law would not apply or be deemed ever to have applied to its ruler. And all this was done in the teeth of opposition from the public and the Baroda Dhara Sabha (legislative assembly). The same year the Maharaja raised his privy purse from Rs. 23 lakhs to Rs. 50 lakhs a year and, in addition, kept on advancing money to himself from state funds. State laws and its administrative and constitutional machinery could not stop him from indulging in such flagrant excesses.

India was not the only country in the world which had rulers and princes. Monarchs, more real and much less shadowy existed elsewhere also. Let us see how much they spent on their maintenance. "The king of England receives as royalty one in 1600 of national revenues, the king of Belgium one in 1,000, the king of Italy one in 500, the king of Denmark one in 300, the Emperor of Japan one in 400, the Queen of the Netherlands one in 600, the king of Norway one in 700."\*

There was a world of contrast between these privy purses and those of the Indian princes. No less amazing were the privy purses of the rulers of states usually called progressive. Mysore which was often described as the "most progressive state in India, had to part with one in every 14 rupees of the state revenue to maintain its ruler; Travancore, Cochin and Hyderabad with one in every 17, 14 and 13 respectively; the progressive Baroda one in every 10; Kolhapur one in every 10; Bhopal one in every 13 and the state of Kashmir spent one in every 8 of the state revenue to maintain the Maharaja. These were astounding figures indeed

\* Memorandum of the foreign Delegation of the All-India states People's Conference—p. 37

but these were also our best figures. An overwhelming majority of the princes appropriated no less than one in every 3 or one in every 2 of the revenues of the states.

The Chamber of Princes attempted more than once to arrive at a generally agreed formula with regard to privy purses. But all its attempts proved abortive. Many a Viceroy had on occasions tried to impress upon the princes the urgent need of distinguishing between the state revenue and the ruler's personal budget. But could it be said that there were even 100 out of 600 odd states whose rulers differentiated between state receipts and personal income? No.

In one respect the princes had gone one better than the present-day socialists. In their own interest they had opted for state trading, by which they meant a system of monopolies in various trades. For example, in nearly all the Saurashtra states, Rajkot, Nawanagar and others, tobacco, cotton, match boxes, salt and several other items were sold under monopoly systems. Monopolies were just auctioned either to the highest bidder or given to a favourite. As a result of it, the people had to pay higher prices for things as compared to the price level obtaining in neighbouring British Indian territory.

Another feature of the states' administration was the tyranny of taxation. There was no rule or law governing the levy of taxation. The ruler could levy any tax and withdraw it any time without the least compunction. At a time when the ruler of Nawanagar was the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, the following taxes were in vogue in his state:

**For city people :**

1. Octroi i.e. tariff on all things imported in the city.
2. House tax.
3. Conservancy tax
4. Wheel tax

5. War loan tax.
6. Grazing tax.
7. Ghee production tax.
8. Ghee import tax.
9. Brokerage tax on things imported.

**For non-agriculturists resident in villages:**

1. Ubhad Vero i. e. tax per head on all non-agriculturist people as follows:

Bankers, grocers, drapers and other goods traders per head

Rs. As. Ps.

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
|   | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. (a) Ordinary traders                             | 3 | 8 | 0 |
| (b) Artisans like Carpenters, tailors etc.          | 3 | 8 | 0 |
| 3. (a) Blacksmiths                                  | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| (b) Agricultural labourers                          | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| (c) Cotton carders, weavers and such others         | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| 4. Other professionals not coming in above classes. | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 5. Shepherds etc.                                   | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 6. Beggars (Brahmans, fakirs, sadhus etc.)          | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 7. Propertyless people doing sundry labour.         | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| 8. Ghee tax.  |   |   |   |
| 9. Grazing tax.                                     |   |   |   |
| 10. Octroi.   |   |   |   |
| 11. Cotton tax.                                     |   |   |   |
| 12. Salt dues.                                      |   |   |   |
| 13. Famine fund.                                    |   |   |   |

**For Agriculturist villagers:**

1. Assessment.
2. Property-right tax four annas per rupee of assessment.

3. Famine tax at one anna per rupee of assessment
- 4 Famine insurance fund
- 5 Milch cattle tax.
- 6 Cotton tax.
- 7 Cattle sale tax
8. Ghee tax.
- 9 Grazing tax
- 10 Agricultural produce sales tax.
- 11 Miscellaneous assessment
12. Girl marriage tax.
- 13 Marriage party tax
- 14 Re-marriage tax.
15. Fruit-trees tax.
16. Raw sugar tax
- 17 Sugar produce tax.
- 18 Postal tax.
- 19 Vegetable produce tax.\*

This staggering list of taxes was no special feature of Nawanagar. More or less the same tax structure obtained in other states. One interesting feature of these taxes was that they were specially directed towards the poor and the middle classes. No one thought of taxing the rich. So, income-tax was looked upon as anathema, except in very few states. The biggest state, Hyderabad, overflowing with Nawabs and Jagirdars, repeatedly rejected the plea of imposing income-tax on the ground of attracting industrialists and moneyed business men from outside the states.

Nothing much need be said about the administration of *justice in the states*. Most of them were too small and their resources too inadequate to have a qualified well-paid judiciary. Even where a system of judiciary in the modern sense was in existence it was too much to expect the Ruler and the privileged class of Jagirdars, who generally manned or

\* "Indian Princes as the People see them", p. 20

controlled the judiciary, to display the objectivity and independence which characterised the administration of justice in British India. At the time the Nazis were preparing to invade Poland, good many of the states in India were yet busy with the codification of their laws. As for smaller states, which accounted for no less than three-fourths of their total number, Lord Linlithgow rightly felt concerned. To give their people a moderately reasonable administration, he had to plead with them to pool their resources and have common services. Referring to such states in his inaugural address to the Chamber of Princes on March, 13, 1939, the Crown representative said:

"Those states whose resources are so limited as virtually to preclude them individually from providing for the requirements of their people in accordance with modern standards have indeed no practical alternative before them.\* I would take this opportunity to impress upon the Rulers of such states, with all the emphasis at my command, the wisdom of taking the earliest possible steps to combine with their neighbours in the matter of administrative services so far as this is practicable... It calls for prompt action, on the part of those concerned, and it is, in my judgment vital in the interests of the smaller states themselves that no time whatever should be lost in taking the necessary steps."

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\* The reference here is to voluntary grouping of smaller states for purposes of administration. This is the main point the Viceroy made in his address to the Chamber of Princes that year.

## States and Era of Development and Reforms (1910-1935)

The growth of political consciousness in British India began slowly to affect public opinion in the native states. The agitation which followed the partition of Bengal in 1905, and the subsequent Swadeshi movement, had their repercussions on the subjects of the princes. Besides, conditions obtaining in most of these territories and the autocratic rule of the princes often inspired concern among Indian leaders in British India. As the Paramount Power itself had to take action against certain rulers for gross misrule, it was not surprising that the people in British India began to discuss openly the affairs of the states and criticise the rulers and the Paramount Power which protected their order. If on the one hand this awakening made educated people sensitive to foreign domination of India, on the other it disillusioned those who once thought well of the Indian rulers constituting Indian India. The princes, thanks to their policy of selfish exclusiveness and narrow self-interest, had dissipated the fund of goodwill that most of them enjoyed in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Their indifference to their people's well-being, their extravagance and their failure to espouse the cause of

better and enlightened rule, cost them whatever little popularity they happened to enjoy earlier. Public men in India now began to criticise the states as stagnant administrative units whose rulers were interested in preserving their territories as backwaters of Indian politics.

The Press in British India began to criticise the ways of the princes and condemn the backwardness of the states. To protect the princes from these violent attacks, the Government of India decided to muzzle the Press. There was hardly any Press worth the name in Indian states; all the curbs which the law sought to apply were thus directed against the Press in the Indian provinces. In 1891 and again in 1910 Press laws were enacted containing clauses for the protection of the princes and their governments against external attacks. As the Press Act of 1910 was repealed, a separate bill was introduced in 1922 in the Legislative Assembly to "prevent the dissemination, by means of books, newspapers and other documents, of matter calculated to bring into hatred and cause or to excite disaffection against princes and Chiefs in India or the Government or administration established in such states." The Central Legislative Assembly got so much excited over this bill that it managed to reject it by a majority of four. In order to put it on the Statute Book, the Viceroy had to use his special powers of certification\* vested in him under Section 67 (b) of the Government of India Act 1919.

### States and Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.

At the time the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were introduced bringing about important changes in the structure of the Central and Provincial Governments, an overwhelming majority of the states were carrying on their administration with

\* In relation to the States; the Governor-General had to take resort to his special powers again a few years later when he issued an Ordinance (Emergency Legislation) to enable the Punjab Government to deal with the Ahrar agitation against the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.



perfect smugness and complacency, for they were assured of full protection against external dangers and internal uprisings. The structure of most of those administrations was outmoded and archaic so that an impartial observer would have got the impression as if for them the 20th century had not yet dawned. Partly because of their vested interests and partly because of the unhealthy sense of security fostered by the policy of the Paramount Power, princely states had lost all incentive for reform and their rulers had no patience with one who thought or spoke of it.

Directly as a result of the British Government's policy the states had remained isolated not only from the mainstream of Indian life but also from one another. A common outlook for discussing problems of common interest was non-existent mainly because the Government of India discouraged the idea of rulers meeting and discussing matters of common interest among themselves.\*

Every state fended for itself, taking care only of the rights and privileges of its ruler and the wishes of the Paramount Power. Never had the states so far been in a position to think of themselves as a whole, when all-India questions came to be examined. They were discouraged from joint action or even collective deliberation by the policy of the British Government, which fostered the isolation of one state from another in official matters.

But the tide which the changing times had brought could not be stemmed by these cautious moves. Economic development, administrative requirements and the growth of political ideas "tended to unite the states and their rulers in

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\* The policy of isolation had been provided for in the treaties and engagements wherein it was said that a ruler shall abstain from interfering in the affairs of any other State or Power and shall have no communication or correspondence with any other State or Power except with the previous sanction of the Governor General in Council.

an effort to secure a precise definition of the essence and limits of the former (The Government of India) and codification of the latter, the Paramount Power in a set of concrete ascertainable rules. Moreover, in the development of the resources of India and the modernisation of its administrative arrangements, communications and trade facilities, different states found themselves faced with similar demands for co-operation in subjects contemplated by British India, and began to be drawn together by the need of determining some common attitude on the part of the states as a whole towards such approaches."\*

These trends were further strengthened by social and economic mixing of the people on an unprecedented scale. Rapid improvement in internal communications and transport swept the barriers of geographical isolation between state and state as also between the states and British India. These developments in India as a whole and the new outlook brought about by the introduction of dyarchy in the provinces within the administrative frame-work, sounded the death-knell of the old policy of "hands off the Indian States" in British India and of "hands off British Indian concern" for the states.

These trends were soon crystallised, as it were, into a firm policy under the compulsion of coming events. Towards the close of the 19th century, the states were given representation on the Famine Commission appointed by the Government of India, for the problems presented by famines could only be solved by a certain pooling of fodder and transport resources, which in turn, called for joint action. This led to the organisation of Indian People's Famine Trust, on which too the states were represented. Only a few years later came the Irrigation Commission, involving utilisation of the water potential of Indian rivers for permanent irrigation. On this

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\*The Indian States and Indian Federation. — p. 60

Princely states may have to form part of an all-India unit ; and as the princes had everything to lose and nothing to gain for themselves by coming close to better-governed and politically conscious Indian provinces, every successive assurance issued on behalf of the Paramount Power far from allaying their misgivings, served to make the princes more and more jittery

The fact is that in the trend of events in the twenties and the thirties there was much that went to confirm the princes in their fear. It is quite possible that some of them in their heart of hearts knew that in trying to perpetuate an outmoded and archaic order they were hoping for the impossible. Self-interest, nevertheless, blinded them to the inner voice of reason. None of them had the courage to take the lead or plough a lonely furrow. Supported by the assurances and buttressed by their new organization, the Chamber of Princes, they made a common cause and decided to swim against the current. Using the forum of the Chamber, they began to voice their feelings day in and day out. In their speeches and grandiose claims, some of them over-stepped the mark. Their clamour for sovereignty and an independent status was too much even for the British Viceroys. In reply to the claim of the biggest among the princes, the Nizam of Hyderabad, Lord Reading was forced to give in his Despatch of March, 26, 1926, what may be called a precise and emphatic definition of paramountcy.\* The Viceroy wrote, "The sovereignty of the British Crown is supreme in India and, therefore, no ruler

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\* The Nizam's letter to the Viceroy referred to his claim to Berar which formed a part of the Central Provinces. The four districts of Berar had been ceded by the Nizam to the British in the 19th century to meet the cost of maintaining the British garrison to protect Hyderabad. For some time past the Nizam and his Prime Minister had made it a policy to reiterate their claims to the ceded districts. The Nizam in his letter expressed the desire to put his case before the British Government and negotiate with them directly.

of an Indian State can justifiably claim to negotiate with the British Government on equal footing."

The letter naturally caused a stir in the princely circles. The Maharaja of Patiala, Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, made a statement in November, 1926, on behalf of the rulers that they had "perused with deep concern certain phrases implied and doctrines enunciated" in the Viceroy-Nizam correspondence. Dissatisfied as the princes were, they demanded an impartial enquiry into the whole relationship between the rulers and the Paramount Power. Consequently a committee was appointed in December, 1927, under the chairman-ship of Sir Harcourt Butler. It reported in 1929. (In an earlier chapter we have given the gist of this committee's recommendations). The Committee did not accept the claim of the princes to sovereignty. The Butler Committee refused to define paramountcy and merely asserted that "paramountcy must remain paramount; it must fulfil its obligations, defining or adapting itself according to the shifting necessities of the time and the progressive development of the states."

This was the main theme of the Butler Committee's report, though on other points, particularly economic relationship between the states and the British provinces, it conceded some of the claims made on behalf of the states. The Committee also conceded the claim that the rulers should not be handed over without their prior agreement, to an Indian Government in British India responsible to an Indian legislature. As V.P. Menon says, this laid the foundation of the policy whereby, in later years, the wedge was to be effectively driven between the states and British India.\*

The apprehensions of the Princes were further confirmed by the recommendations made by the Simon Commission and the decision taken by the Government of India on them.

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\* The Story of the Integration of Indian States. P.23

The Commission suggested the setting up of a standing consultative body comprising representatives from both British India and the states to be called the Council for Greater India, with powers of discussion and of reaching and recording deliberative results on topics falling within the list of matters of common concern. There was nothing radical as such in this proposal, but to the princes all hints and suggestions about the future set up of India, political or administrative, came like a red rag to a bull. For this very reason they did not take kindly to the recommendation of the Government of India on the Simon Commission's report. The Government had laid stress on the essential unity embracing the whole of India and hoped that at some future date this unity would find expression in certain joint political institutions.

Subsequent events and joint consultations in India as well as at the Round Table Conference in London were marked by the unhelpful, selfish and unpatriotic attitude of the princes, although at the first Round Table Conference in 1930, they had formally accepted the proposal for the creation of an All-India Federation. It had also become customary for them to vent grandiloquent sentiments in support of federation in their banquet speeches and on ceremonial occasions in India. But whenever the details were discussed the princes laid down conditions and asked for assurances which would have had the effect of nullifying any union between the provinces and the states.

The princes' insistence on their right to nominate their quota of representatives on the Federal Legislature proved to be the principal hindrance because of which negotiations between the Chamber of Princes and the Congress party could never make any headway. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, 250 seats were allotted to British India

and 125 to the states in the Lower House; whereas in the Council of States the allotment was 156 and 104 respectively. While the representatives from the provinces were to be elected, those from the states were to be nominated by the rulers of the states concerned. Again, while the control of the Federal Government over the provinces was to be uniform, it was to vary in the case of the Indian states according to the terms of the Instrument of Accession signed by individual rulers at the time of joining the Federation.

In spite of all these concessions, some fair and a few unfair to the provinces, the states reacted coldly to the federal plan. The princes remained adamant that they themselves were the final arbiters of the destiny of their people and best judges as to the kind of government their subjects should have. There was nothing common between this attitude and the Congress demand for equal treatment as between the provinces and the states. But it was expected that the princes would at least heed the advice of the Crown Representative who had been touring the states for months trying to persuade them to join the Federation and allaying their fears. Eventually not one prince offered to join and the plan had to be withdrawn.

We have said so much about the ruling princes of India, their relationship with the Paramount Power and the claims and counter-claims of the two, but what about the people living in the states, who numbered almost seventy five million ? The will of the people was at no stage taken into consideration either by the princes or the Paramount Power; the princes because they were too conscious of their own power and authority and did not want to share it willingly with their people, and the Paramount Power because it was keen on building up the princely territories as an effective check against the national upsurge of the Indian people and

wanted to keep the states as a happy hunting ground for British enterprise in the future

However the states people were far too many and too close to their brethren in British India to remain silent spectators in this game of power. They approached the Indian National Congress and appealed to Mahatma Gandhi, who himself hailed from an Indian State, for help. The Congress had full sympathy with the states people, but it was hesitant to take up their cause directly. At its Nagpur session (December, 1920), the Congress had laid down its policy as being one of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the states. A few years later, Gandhiji, while presiding over the Kathiawad Political Conference in 1925 said "Just as the National Congress cannot have any effective voice in the relations between Indian states and the British Government, even so will its interference be ineffective as to the relations between the Indian states and their subjects." Gandhiji's thesis was that all would be well if British India became self-governing and possessed power to influence the princes, on the one hand, and the British Government, on the other. Then there was also no organisation in the states worth the name which might be expected to fight for the popular cause and which might maintain proper liaison with the Congress.

The states people, though they were never in doubt as to which way the sympathies of India's national leaders and the Congress lay, felt disheartened by the formal and official attitude of the Congress. Driven to despair and under pressure from their Congress sympathisers, they formed an organisation of their own in 1927, called the All-India States People's Conference. Gandhiji blessed it, and national leaders in British India supported it. The princes and the British Government began to look upon it as the states wing

of the Indian National Congress. The moment it was formed in Poona, the organisation was declared an outcaste by all the princes, so that till 1945 the States People's Conference had to meet and carry out its day-to-day activities outside the territories of states in various places in British Indian provinces.

In 1928-29 when the Butler Committee was visiting various places for compiling its report, the States People's Conference petitioned it for a hearing, but the petition was rejected on the plea that such a thing would fall outside the terms of reference of the Committee. The Conference had to satisfy itself with sending a memorandum to the Butler Committee.

The Nehru Committee set up by the All Parties Conference in 1928 to frame a dominion constitution, however, took due note of "the historical, religious, sociological and economic affinities between the people of British India and the states." Referring to the problem of the states, the Nehru Committee said :

"It is inconceivable that the people of the states who are fired by the same ambitions and aspirations as the people of British India, will quietly submit to existing conditions for ever. or that the people of British India bound by the closest ties of family, race and religion to their brethren on the other side of an imaginary line will never make common cause with them."

However, whatever India's national leaders might have thought or said and whatever the States People's Conference might have done to draw the attention of an enlightened western nation's representative towards their plight, the people of the states were almost written off as an entity during the fateful years 1920-35. No one heard them and none gave them any quarter, to say nothing of official recognition. The



Chamber of Princes, the Butler Committee, the Simon Commission, the Round Table Conferences, the Joint Parliamentary Committees, all came and went by without even so much as taking note of the views of 75 million people who happened to be born in Indian states. Even the homage which their agitation for civil rights and liberal administration impliedly paid to the British Government's administration in the Provinces, did not move the British power in India. The Viceroy and those who manned the Political Department were realists. They knew that sweet and flattering words, even if they came from an adversary, buttered no parsnips

## Beginning of Resistance

When the great revolt of 1857 was suppressed to the satisfaction of the British Power in India, the general view held in official circles in India and in London was that the outcome of the popular uprising might have been different but for the loyal support of the Indian princes, especially the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Sikh princes in the Punjab. The British Government, therefore, came out with a proclamation guaranteeing the rights and privileges of the princes and assuring them against the annexation of any further princely territory.

The princes were, on the whole, appreciative of the British policy and were drawn towards the British with a feeling of loyalty and security. There were, however, some princes who in their heart of hearts were not very happy at the turn events had taken. The states in the Deccan, for example, like Kohlapur, Sangli, Miraj etc., were not yet fully reconciled to the dominance of a foreign power over India. As Lord Dalhousie had annexed some Maratha states in the Deccan, the surviving Maratha states harboured a dislike for the British, though they were as loud in their profession of loyalty to them as princes in the other parts of the country.

to vie with one another in suppressing popular movements and organisations. The states people, on the other hand, began to look to political leaders in British India for support. The Kohlapur Darbar declared the Lok Sabha illegal. Even the celebration of the Shivaji festival was banned. In Udaipur, the celebration of Pratap Jayanti was banned by the Maharana. The powers of municipal committees were curbed and educational institutions started by private individuals for workers and labourers were summarily closed down. Even the Swadeshi Movement started by Tilak was looked upon with disfavour and the use of foreign cloth by employees of certain Darbars was openly encouraged.

By taking recourse to a policy of repression at the instance of the British, the rulers of the Indian states lost support of their people and became willing tools in the hands of the British to hold the balance against the upsurge of political agitation in the country at large. This naturally disillusioned and exasperated the states people.

Previously they had agitated in support of the princes. They had looked to them as if they were their natural leaders, but now the people were forced to conclude that their feeling of softness for the princes was misplaced and that they would have to fight them for civil liberties and liberalisation of states administration. The determination of the people to fight for the right to agitate and the relentless repression of that right by the princes drove the national movement in the states underground.

The turn in the tide of the Congress agitation in British India and the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi as its foremost leader, had its natural repercussions on the states people's movement. In spite of the rule of repression and ruthless terrorising by the Darbars, the states people had now decided to stand on their own legs. They began their work by setting

up Sewa Samitis, hitkarini sabhas, night schools, reading rooms and circulating libraries. Efforts were made at times to exploit general dissatisfaction caused now and then among the people on account of favouritism, unmerited appointments and dismissals, faulty administration of justice, the enactment of objectionable laws and sometimes by the foreign voyages of the princes. Every opportunity was availed of for creating public opinion against oppressive laws and personal rule of the princes.

When, however, even these innocuous public institutions, devoted more to social work than to politics, were banned; the states people re-established them outside the states in British India, from where they started a vehement publicity campaign. Bombay, Ajmer, Delhi, Lahore, Madras and Poona became powerful centres from where they ventilated their grievances openly and vigorously, demanding civic rights, exposing the vagaries of princely administrations and condemning the wasteful habits of their rulers.

This was the time when the states people organised praja mandals in their respective states, whose aims and objects were avowedly political. Baroda was probably the first state to have a praja mandal. Its example was soon followed by Bhavnagar. Junagadh, Rajkot and Gondal, etc., in Kathiawad, and Jodhpur, Jaipur, Bikaner, Alwar, Udaipur and other states in Rajputana.

The Praja Mandals started holding meetings and conferences within the states and, when banned there, at other places outside the state for furthering their cause. Very often these conferences attracted political leaders from the British provinces. For a time these ad hoc meets served excellently well the purpose of a public forum for ventilating the grievances of the states people. They were lucky in so far as they never had to strain much for carrying conviction with their audience

about the nature and cause of their discontent. For, by their arbitrary and autocratic rule, inept administrations and disgusting wastefulness, the princes had alienated their subjects so much that the people were ever willing to listen to their ruler's detractors \*

Thus the agitation of states people continued to gather momentum. Though the leaders who organised political conferences deserved full credit for the suffering they underwent and the sacrifices they made, yet there can be no two opinions that the agitation mainly thrived on the misdeeds of certain princes. They provided their adversaries with such glaring instances of high-handedness and tyranny that no sensible man could help sympathising with the states people. It is a point of historical importance that but for the flagrant abuse of power and unrestricted display of authority made by the princes, the states people's agitation might well have fizzled out, particularly because in the beginning the Indian National Congress was keen on keeping aloof and on not interfering with the states.

Take for example, the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes in late twenties, the Maharaja of Patiala. He had earned a notoriety for his orgies, his harem and his autocratic rule. He had to his credit innumerable cases of abduction of women, married and unmarried. In one case he had caused the abduction of a married woman and offered her husband Rs 20,000 as a price!

The officers of the Political Department of the Government of India not only connived at this crime but actually condemned the acceptance of the "price" by the aggrieved hus-

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\* In many cases foreign observers including quite a few British members of the Indian Civil Service ridiculed and openly condemned the administration of some of the Indian States. Gwynn, a retired member of the ICS had no hesitation in branding the princely order as a class of unpardonable wastrels,

band. The Maharaja had set altogether new records in licentious behaviour on the personal plane and mal-administration on the state level. He was credited with having a barem bigger than that of any of the Mughals. Apart from the power of wealth which he flaunted, the Maharaja of Patiala was also guilty of every conceivable crime that a man of debased and perverted taste could commit.

Yet the Maharaja of Patiala was not an exception by any means. Truth to tell, his example inspired the princes who looked upon him as a hero and a true leader of their order. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to quote another instance, that of Gondal in Western India. In 1923, the citizens of Dhoraj submitted a signed petition to the Maharaja citing cases of bribery and misconduct on the part of a judicial officer. As no action was taken on their petition, they organised a public meeting. Subsequently the judicial officer was asked by the Maharaja to clear his conduct. The said officer's reaction to this decision was startling. He started legal proceedings against seven leaders who were considered by him to be at the root of the agitation against him. Though the officer in question died of heart trouble soon after, the false cases launched by him against the citizens continued and all the accused were sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment. Nearly all of them languished in Gondal's jail, which might well be described as a grave for the living. To this can be added innumerable instances like those connected with the rulers of Alwar, Bajana, Nawanagar, Cutch, Loharu, Bikaner, Jodhpur and a host of other states, not excluding the biggest among them, Hyderabad and Kashmir.

•The new climate of consciousness made large sections of people living in the states sensitive to the anomalous and backward conditions prevailing in the princely territories. The praja mandals and the All-India States People's Conference emboldened them so that they could protest against

those conditions and demand better administrations. In cases of oppression and palpable misrule these organisations now and then set up enquiry committees for purposes of investigation and enlisting popular support for their cause. The disclosures which such committees made against the Darbar administrations of Nawanagar (1928), Dhrangadhra (1930), Jhabua (1936), Patiala (1939), Tehri Garhwal (1947) and many others were startling enough to turn the printed reports into best sellers. The leaflets and booklets thus published were always in heavy demand. Even if newspapers could not reproduce their contents, they received wide publicity through hand to hand distribution among the people.

An official report brought out by the States People's Conference about the doings of the Maharaja of Patiala and the sufferings of his subjects, deserves a special mention. Two enquiry committees had collected material and sorted out evidence in this case. The committee which drafted the report and published the findings consisted of N V Gadgil, Mulraj Karsandas and Balwantray Mehta. The report was appropriately titled "Indictment of Patiala". Though it was priced Rs 5 per copy, it had a brisk sale so that the demand soon outstripped the supply. Here is a glimpse of the charges the enquiry committee framed and went into. All of these charges were well substantiated. Says the report:

"In the 'Patiala Indictment' twelve main counts were drawn and we propose to give below briefly the summary of each count so that it will be possible to understand and appreciate the entire oral and documentary evidence."

#### "(1) LAL SINGH'S MURDER.

It was alleged in the memorial that one Sardar Lal Singh was murdered at the instigation of the

Maharaja, because he refused to divorce his wife, Dilip Kaur. The Committee held that there were reasons to believe that Sardar Lal Singh was murdered by one Ghamdur Singh to secure Maharaja's favour under instructions received directly or indirectly.

"(2) It was alleged that with a view to concocting evidence against the Maharaja of Nabha, the Maharaja of Patiala set up a bomb factory in the fort of Bahadur Garh in Patiala State and commissioned one Dr. Baxis Singh to supervise it. The Committee came to the conclusion that this allegation was **Prima facie** proved and that a bomb factory was set up at Bahadur Garh.

"(3) It was alleged that Bachiter Kaur, wife of Dr. Baxis Singh, was murdered by the order of and in the presence of the Maharaja and his son was taken into custody and not restored to the father. The Committee held that Patiala Darbar was accountable for the disappearance of Bachiter Kaur and her daughter while the Maharaja was personally libable for the wrongful custody of the son.

"(4) It was alleged that one Amar Kaur, wife of Sardar Amar Singh, was taken possession of by the Maharaja and that she was in the palace and that Amar Singh was continuously harassed by false prosecution. The Committee found this case to have been proved.

"(5) **Confiscation of property, arrest and imprisonment of Sardar Harchand Singh Jaijee.**

It was alleged that Sardar Harchand Singh refused to send his wife to the palace, and his property was



confiscated and he was detained without trial. The Committee held the whole charge to have been proved

- (6) It was alleged in the memorial that the Patiala Police started false criminal cases and certain instances were pointed out. The committee held that this allegation was substantially proved

- (7) **Inhuman torture, illegal arrests and imprisonment and illegal confiscation of properties.**

It was alleged that many citizens of Patiala who tried to meet Sardar Kharak Singh, a well-known Sikh leader, were arrested and imprisoned by the police of Patiala, and in many cases their property was confiscated. The Committee held this was true.

- (8) **Ruinous consequences of Maharaja's Shikars.**

It was alleged that the Maharaja extracted compulsory work from agriculturists during his Shikar trips, and that food supply was requisitioned without payment on such occasions. The Committee held that these allegations were proved

- (9) **Tyranny and Begar**

It was alleged that *Begar* of men, provision and cattle was enforced during movements of the army and visits of state officers. The Committee found this to have been substantially proved

- (10) There was an allegation of non-refund of war-loans. The Committee came to the conclusion that in some cases war-loan was not refunded

- (11) **Wayward revenue assessment and imposition of new taxes and other matters.**

The Committee came to the conclusion that the

Maharaja raised taxes of all kinds, and the land revenue assessment was increased at the sweet will of the Revenue Department.

**(12) Misappropriation of public funds.**

The Committee believe that the Maharaja raised large sums of money by way of public funds and rendered no account showing how much money was raised and to what purpose it was diverted."

In point of the element of sensation, utter inconsideration, extravagance and cruelties perpetrated on the people, the reports of other enquiries made by the States People's Conference on Kashmir, Alwar, Dewas, Orissa States, etc., were of equal interest and no less consequence. The rulers as a class had lost much of the traditional respect their subjects used to hold them in. The princes were publicly criticised at all levels—by the political agitators, British Indian legislators enlightened statesmen in India and England, and even the Viceroy never lost an opportunity to admonish and advise them.

As one looks back, certain factors emerge which must be reckoned in order to have a clear picture of the States' problem and a correct appraisal of the resistance movement. Extravagant though the princes were, it must be admitted that most of them often responded generously to appeals made for certain nation-building causes like the spread of education, promotion of fine arts, preservation of Indian culture, antiquities and national monuments etc. They responded to such appeals whenever they came from British Indian leaders for the establishment of public institutions outside the states. The Banaras Hindu University and the Aligarh Muslim University were largely the result of the princes' munificence. Similarly they had created endowments for helping other all-India educational and technological institutions. In the matter of en-

couraging fine arts, no one would deny it even today that but for the patronage extended by the princes to Indian classical music, dancing, classical literature, painting, architecture, etc., quite a few of these arts would either have languished or suffered considerably

It is a pity that for these good traits, the princes could not get the credit which they deserved at that time. For this however, they had to thank themselves, for the personal lives of most of them and the constitutional and administrative records of most of the states were so uninspiring that these good deeds done at the cost of public funds made no effect on the people. Glaring misdeeds of some of the rulers brought the entire princely order into disrepute so that even the good traits of the states were offset by them. Thus, we see that even what might have been looked upon as commendable cut no ice with the people at all and made no tangible effect on the agitation for civil liberties and responsible government in the states.

While dealing with the resistance movement in states, we must reckon another factor which helped it. That was the haphazard demarcation of the boundaries of Indian provinces which cut across linguistic and cultural regions. For example, the Marathi speaking, the Kannada speaking and the Telugu speaking people were distributed over several provinces and states. This led to agitation for linguistic unification in the early twenties of this century. The Samyukta Maharashtra, the Samyukta Karnataka, Vishal Andhra and Aikya Kerala agitations were conceived as early as 1916. None of these agitations could be waged without involving the Indian states, for, large linguistic groups lived in princely territories. Possibly the Congress decision to set up linguistic provinces for purposes of party organisation lent force to this agitation which, in turn, created dissatisfaction against the states.

Thus the prospect of linguistic unification at some future date drew together equally enthusiastically the people of British India and the states, forging a powerful link between them. It would be true to say that the concept of community of interest was born of this cultural and linguistic affinity. Economic and political considerations, which soon after appeared on the scene, further strengthened that affinity ; and this, in turn, vested the freedom struggle in states with a wider self-interest in the eyes of the people of British India. This interest is unmistakably reflected in the resolutions adopted from time to time by all-India public bodies like the Indian National Congress, the Liberal Federation and latterly the Muslim League.

## States People and the Congress

In its attitude towards the Indian states problems, the Congress was throughout almost entirely guided by Mahatma Gandhi. As the supreme and unquestioned leader of the Congress, Gandhiji had the final say in many matters of national import, but he was considered specially qualified to determine the policy of the Congress with regard to the princes and the states people's problems. Besides him, other front-rank Congress leaders who displayed special interest in the problems of the states people were Vallabhbhai Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya.

From 1920 to 1947, Gandhiji wrote and spoke on this question times without number. In fact he was always in correspondence with leaders of the states and allotted considerable space to their grievances in the 'Harijan'. A careful study of the letters exchanged between Gandhiji and the leaders of the states reveals that though he and the Congress had full sympathy with the states people in their struggle, they were not prepared to interfere with the internal affairs of the states. The reasons for it were, from the standpoint of Gandhiji and the Congress, purely practical. The policy of non-interference in the affairs of the states was considered

by him as wise and sound. The states, he thought, were independent entities under the British law and as such that part of India which was described as British had no more power to shape the policy of the states than it had to meddle with the affairs of a foreign country. Gandhiji further clarified his position by saying that he wished it could be otherwise, but he was helpless in the matter. He agreed that Indian states were without doubt an integral part of geographical India, but this factor alone did not entitle the people living in states to expect outsiders to shape the course of events in princely territories.

According to Gandhiji, it was not lack of appreciation or sympathy that compelled resort to the policy of non-interference on the part of the Congress, but it was sheer helplessness which dictated this policy. It was his conviction that any attempt on the part of the Congress at interference would only damage the cause of the states people. He lost no opportunity to advise the princes to grant autonomy to their subjects and regard themselves as trustees of the people over whom they ruled, drawing for themselves only a small fixed percentage of the income. Gandhiji had never lost hope that the princes would respond to his advice and for that reason, he never sought to destroy their status. As he repeatedly said, he was keen on converting them to his view by persuasion.

It must be said that Gandhiji's attitude towards the problem of the states throughout remained consistent. He summarised it wonderfully well in his reply to N. C. Kelkar's letter. As president of the All-India States People's Conference (1934), Kelkar had asked Gandhiji to clarify his statement at the Round Table Conference about the election of state's representatives in the proposed federation. At the RTC Gandhiji had expressed views favouring the election of the state representatives, but he had not laid it down as an

essential condition of the Congress joining the federation Kelkar had now asked Gandhiji in his letter "to make it clear beyond the possibility of doubt, for we know that the rulers of the states are putting a different interpretation on what you said." In his letter he further added: "Since in the final determination of the Congress policy on these points your personal view plays such a decisive part, we are anxious to know whether election of the states people and a Declaration of Rights in their interest are, in your opinion, merely desirable features of a federation or essential conditions thereof .".

Gandhiji's reply to Kelkar's letter was not calculated to remove the misgivings of the states people. Instead of dealing directly with the points raised by Kelkar, he wrote that what he had said at the Round Table Conference was "in the nature of an appeal to the Princes" It did not imply, he added, that whether they listened to the appeal or not, the Congress would enter the federation. Gandhiji reiterated that the policy of non-interference that the Congress had followed was "wise and sound". This was followed by a statement of his own views about the states He said :

"The states are independent entities under the British law That part of India which is described as British has no more power to shape the policy of the states than it has (say) that of Afghanistan or Ceylon.

"I wish it were otherwise but I recognise my impotence in the matter India of the states is undoubtedly an integral part of geographical India But that carried us no further than where we stand today Portuguese and French India are also an integral part of geographical India, but we are powerless to shape the course of events there,

"We enrol members from the states in the Congress

We receive considerable assistance from them. It is not want of appreciation or will that compels our non-interference. It is our helplessness.

"It is my conviction that any attempt on the part of the Congress at interference can only damage the cause of the people in the states.

"But there is nothing to prevent us from urging the states to adopt a certain policy.

"I am of the opinion that whatever we are able to accomplish in British India is bound to affect the states."\*

Gandhiji often repeated his favourite theory that he regarded the princes as trustees of the people. He had not lost hope, he said, that they would deem it a pride to become real trustees of their people. He did not seek to destroy their status, as he believed in the conversion of individuals and societies. In principle, Gandhiji was against taking recourse to coercion or joining issues with the princes openly with regard to the demands of the states people, but in his friendly advice to them he did not mince words and exposed their weaknesses with a frankness which even their open critics were generally reluctant to resort to.

As long back as in 1916, Gandhiji had said in his speech at the opening of the Banaras Hindu University that there was no salvation for India unless the princes "stripped themselves of their jewellery and held that in trust for the people of their states." It was, however, in his presidential address at the Kathiawar Political Conference in 1925 that Gandhiji enunciated his policy towards the princes. He happened to be Congress President at the time, but he made it clear that the views he was expressing were personal and did not bear the *imprimatur* of the Congress. He said, "I have often declared

\* The Indian States Problem by M.K. Gandhi.

—pp. 64-65,



that the Congress should generally adopt a policy of non-interference with regard to questions affecting Indian states. At a time when the people of British India are fighting for their own freedom, for them to interfere with the affairs of the Indian states would only be to betray impotence. Just as the Congress clearly cannot have an effective voice in the relations between Indian states and the British Government, even so will its interference be ineffective as to the relations between the Indian states and their subjects." Nevertheless, Gandhiji was never in doubt that the people in British India as well as Indian states were one, for India was one. "There is no difference, for example, between the needs and the manners and customs of Indians in Baroda and of Indians in Ahmedabad. The people of Bhavnagar are closely related with the people of Rajkot."\*

Referring to the conditions obtaining in the states Gandhiji said, "The present condition of Indian states is, in my opinion, somewhat pitiable. For, the princes have no independence. Real power does not consist in the ability to inflict capital punishment upon the subjects, but in the will and the ability to protect the subjects against the world. Today Indian states do not have this ability, and consequently by disuse the will also is as good as gone. On the other hand their power to oppress the subjects appears to have increased"\*\*. This sums up Mahatma Gandhi's attitude and policy towards states people. This attitude naturally influenced the Congress organisation which he led.

A study of the Congress policy towards the states shows that during the course of 50 years it passed through several stages. In the pre-satyagraha era, that is to say, before Gandhiji became its supreme leader, the attitude of the Congress towards the princes was that of admiration and respectful support. In 1894, it had adopted a resolution on

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\* Ibid, page 9

\*\* Ibid, page 10

the demise of the Mysore ruler praising his wisdom and many qualities of head and heart. Two years later, it again came to the rescue of the princes by passing a resolution that no Indian prince or chief should be deposed on the ground of maladministration till this charge was established to the satisfaction of a public tribunal. It went further and added that the tribunal should command the confidence alike of the Government and the princes. The Congress of those days ignored the states people completely. In fact the consciousness of their rights had not yet fully dawned on the people and they had not begun to be looked upon as a separate entity as distinguished from the state. When the Congress was reorganised at its Nagpur session in 1918, the old policy was reversed in theory. Organisationally, the country was divided into 21 Congress provinces and the states were incorporated in adjoining provinces. The states people could become members of the District Congress Committees and through them, they could be returned as members of the All-India Congress Committee and as delegates to the Congress. But even so a proviso was added—that the inclusion of states people in Congress activities did not mean any interference by the Congress in the internal affairs of the states.

This policy continued for about 10 years. The states people were allowed to enrol themselves as Congress members but the Congress would not agree to interfere in the internal affairs of the states, in spite of the latter's express disappointment and loud protests. The controversy was revived in 1927-28 with the appointment and subsequent visit of the Simon Commission to India. The All-Parties Conference met to frame a mutually agreed constitution and the Nehru Report was the result. This was the first occasion that an elaborate elucidation of the relations between the British crown, the British Parliament, the Indian states

and British India was attempted. The Congress felt that the existence of the states could not be ignored and that the states people formed an integral part of the Indian nation. For the first time, the Congress at its Calcutta session (1928) deleted the clause relating to non-interference and while urging the princes to guarantee fundamental rights of citizenship to their people and concede responsible Government, it assured the people of the states of its sympathy for them and support in their struggle for the attainment of their legitimate aims

This resolution of the Congress was ever afterwards looked upon as their Magna Carta by the states people. The All-India States People's Conference whose birth synchronised with this event came closer to the Congress and began to be looked upon almost as a wing of the bigger organisation. For several years past the states people had been ~~meeting~~ separately year after year, representing mostly the states of certain regions. The first fully representative conference of the states subjects, as we have said earlier, was held in 1927 in Bombay. So far these meets had an independent character, choosing their own time and venue. Hereafter the All-India States People's Conference began to convene its annual sessions often along with the sessions of the Congress.

Closer understanding between the Congress and the states people's movement was further evidenced in the countrywide non co-operation campaigns launched by the Congress. The states people had been taking active part in all Congress struggles since 1920, but the Satyagraha campaign of 1930-31 was particularly marked by their enthusiastic support. Along with the people living in the provinces, the states people also courted imprisonment in thousands, and thus responded to the call of the Congress.

But during the years following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact

and the withdrawal of the Satyagraha movement, the states people were irked by the contrast in the situation obtaining in the states and the provinces. While the latter felt the flush of success followed by the release of political prisoners and some understanding between the Government and the Congress, in the states no change of any kind was discernible. The state governments continued to be as vigilant and suspicious of political workers' activity as ever before. They did not allow the spirit of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact to influence them. Political prisoners were not released and no consideration was shown to the leaders of the All-India States People's Conference.\* Naturally the states people felt dejected and forlorn. They felt as if they had been let down. Again they started asking for fresh assurances of support from the Congress. Their grievance was that the pledge of 'sympathy and support' given in Calcutta in 1928 and confirmed by Gandhiji at the Round Table Conference in 1931 and later on by the All-India Congress Committee at Jabalpur in 1935 had been watered down by the Congress insistence on its old-time non-interference policy.

After the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, Gandhiji had made an appeal to the princes and the British Government warning them that 'an undiluted autocracy, howsoever benevolent it may be, and an undiluted democracy are an incompatible mixture bound to result in an explosion.' He reminded them that the Congress had refrained from interfering in the internal affairs of the states "with great wisdom and equally great restraint," in order not only not to unnecessarily wound the susceptibilities of the states but also by reason of the self-imposed restraint to make its voice heard by the states on a suitable occasion. And then Gandhiji added : "I think that occasion has now arrived."

\* Only in few cases popular leaders were released before the expiry of their terms of imprisonment, as, for example, Jai Narain Vyas was released by the Jodhpur State government soon after the signing of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

At the Round Table Conference too, he expressed similar views and sentiments. He said "If one can divide a living body into two parts, you may divide India into two parts. It has lived as *one country from time immemorial* and no artificial boundry can possibly divide it" \*.

At its Jabalpur session, the All India Congress Committee declared that "the interests of the people of the Indian states are as much the concern of the Indian National Congress as those of the people of British India, and it assures them of its full support in their struggle for freedom".

But the good effect of such resolutions of unambiguous support to the states people in their struggle for responsible Government was often marred by divergent views or contradictory statements made by responsible Congress leaders. *Perhaps the most unfortunate of them was the speech made by Bhulabhai Desai while presiding over a conference of the Bar Association of Mysore State in 1935.* Far from sympathising with the states people, Bhulabhai Desai began his speech as if he envied them. He declared - "The states subjects are not burdened with a foreign domination. Their only complaint is that power and authority are concentrated in a single hand, but their problem is much easier of solution than the problem of winning Swaraj for British India."

When asked by the president of the Mysore Bar Association to throw light on the relationship between the Congress and the states subjects, Desai had no hesitation in adding that the states were "foreign" territories and that there could be no direct relationship between the states people and the much-talked of federation. In his view the princes alone had the right to determine the nature of relationship between the states and the federation. Coming as this statement did at a time when a fierce controversy was raging between accredited representatives of the states

\* Ibid, page 55

and the Darbars as to how states should be represented in case they joined the federation, Bhulabhai Desai's retrograde suggestion that the people of the states had no *locus standi* in the matter naturally came as a big shock to them.

Desai was not an ordinary member of the Congress. He was a front rank Congress leader and president of the Congress Parliamentary Party at the Centre. His address at the Mysore Bar Association and the views he expressed in a letter to the Congress President, Babu Rajendra Prasad, were in direct conflict with repeated expressions of sympathy for the states people's cause by Mahatma Gandhi and other prominent Congress leaders. Once the demand of the states people was admitted to be legitimate and just, there was no alternative for any Congress leader to supporting their contention at least in principle. Bhulabhai Desai did not even do that. Far from doing so, he cut the very ground from underneath their feet and thus robbed the states people of the very basis on which their agitation and the resistance movement stood. His statement was responsible for widespread dissatisfaction among the people of the states with the Congress and its policy towards the princely territories.

The civil disobedience movement, as has been said, was not confined only to British India when the Congress launched it in the early thirties. The people of the states had taken their dues here in it both in the provinces as well as in some states. In Travancore state, for example, the states people's Satyagraha had borne fruit in so far as the state government was forced to take steps for throwing open all roads, wells and schools to all communities. In Miraj a campaign was set on foot in which eminent men like N. C. Kelkar and some members of the Servants of India Society took part in order to vindicate their right of freedom of speech. A similar Satyagraha movement was started in Morvi where a worker was exterminated, but it had to be withdrawn on the advice of Gandhiji. The Satyagraha

started in Mahia near Morvi, on the other hand, succeeded in bringing about a settlement between the people and the state government, though the pact was broken soon after by the latter.

Similar Satyagraha campaigns organised in Jhanda, Dhirol and Jamnagar proved to be quite successful. In every case, the minimum demands of the people were conceded by the Durbars. Dhrangadhra was the scene of another Satyagraha campaign arising from the attempt of the people of the state to hold the Kathiawad political conference there. The Kathiawad political conference had a history which, one thought, would inspire some confidence even among the princes, for it had been presided over in earlier years by eminent persons like Mahatma Gandhi, Vithalbhai Patel, Abbas Tyabji, A. V. Thakkar and Vallabhbhai Patel. On one occasion, the conference had passed a resolution at the instance of Gandhiji not to criticise or censure any individual state. These antecedents notwithstanding, the state Government banned the conference at Dhrangadhra. Consequently a struggle ensued. There were arrests and lathi charges. When as a result of negotiations, a settlement was reached, the state Government ignored it. It was followed by the appointment of an enquiry committee whose entry was banned in the state. Again the round of hartals and public meetings started. However, on the unconditional release of the people arrested by the state Government, the Satyagraha was withdrawn.

This being the case, if the states people felt that the Congress stand that the states should fend for themselves and stand on their own feet was unjustifiable, if not cussed, they can hardly be blamed for it. Firstly, it might be asked as to why the Congress never thought of holding any of its in an Indian state when, apparently, it claimed so often to stand for the whole of India. Secondly, having seen for itself what an uphill task it was to hold a public

meeting in a state, to say nothing of starting a Satyagraha campaign there, the Congress ought to have shown a better appreciation of the difficulties of the states people. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the inherent difficulty of the situation as much as the question of policy or principle prevented the Congress from going as far as it might have liked to go to the aid of the states people.

The states people held Gandhiji in great respect, but they were not always able to appreciate his argument that "agitation for democratic institutions should sprout from the soil itself and not be transplanted from outside."\* Even if it is held that subsequent organisation of praja mandals which sprouted in most of the states from within was directly the result of the refusal by the Congress Party to interfere with the internal affairs of the states, the people of the states found it hard to absolve the Indian National Congress of the charge of indifference to their fate.

With the overwhelming success of the Congress in the 1937 general election and with the Congress capturing a majority of seats in six provinces, however, a new chapter opened in the relationship between the Congress and the states people. This great success encouraged the states subjects to agitate with fresh vigour for civil liberties and responsible government. There was already unrest in many of the states, and now it took the shape of mass demonstrations, leading to collective agitation in some of them. The Congress governments in the neighbouring states at once expressed themselves in favour of the states people.

In Mysore, for example, the agitation for responsible government and recognition of the Congress flag was sought to be suppressed by the local government by force. There were serious allegations of maltreatment of Satyagrahis in jails. At one place fire was opened by the state police at a

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\* Rajendra Prasad—Autography—P. 412.



public meeting, resulting in a few deaths. This brought in the Congress Committee. Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Balwantray Mehta toured the state to see things for themselves. In October, 1937, the All-India Congress Committee meeting in Calcutta censured the Mysore Government for its policy of repression and appealed to the people of Indian states and British India "to give all support and encouragement to the people of Mysore in the struggle against the state for right of self-determination."\* Simultaneously or subsequently similar agitations occurred in Travancore, Kashmir, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Rajkot and the Orissa States.

The Calcutta resolution of the All-India Congress Committee did not commend itself to Gandhiji who publicly criticised it in severe terms. This difference of opinion among top Congress leaders made the discussion of the states problem at Haripura somewhat acrid. The most controversial point in the draft resolution prepared by the Working Committee at Haripura related to the clause which banned the organisation of the Congress committees in Indian states. In the light of the happenings in Mysore and the civil disobedience campaign going on there, it was felt that the Congress could not get embroiled with civil disobedience in the states with all its implications and repercussions on other parts of the country. It was also pointed out on behalf of the Congress that when it was a question of civil disobedience, the Congress could not be there to help Satyagrahis and other workers as regards constructive programme. Besides, there were other all-India organisations, doubtless affiliated to, but more or less working independently of, the Congress to render necessary aid to the states people.

The Haripura resolution adopted under Gandhiji's influence changed the Congress stand to some extent as it adopted a milder and moderately worded resolution. The

\* V P Menon—The story of the Integration of the Indian States  
page 42

Congress reiterated its objective of standing for the same political, social and economic freedom in the states as in the case of the rest of India and of considering the states as an integral part of India; but it held that it was not yet able to obtain the liberation of the states subjects by itself. The burden of carrying on the struggle for freedom must fall on the people of the states, it added.

The resolution adopted by the Congress at Haripura in February, 1938, is of such basic importance for determining the relationship between the Congress and the freedom struggle in states, that it must be stated here in full.

The following is the text of that resolution :—

"The Congress stands for the same political, social and economic freedom in the states as in the rest of India and considers the states as integral parts of India which cannot be separated. The *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence, which is the objective of the Congress, is for the whole of India inclusive of the states, for the integrity and unity of India must be maintained in freedom as it has been maintained in subjection. The only kind of Federation that can be acceptable to the Congress is one in which the states participate as free units, enjoying the same measure of democratic freedom as the rest of India. The Congress, therefore, stands for full responsible government and the guarantee of civil liberty in the states, and deplors the present backward conditions and utter lack of freedom and suppression of civil liberties in many of these states.

"The Congress considers it its right and privilege to work for the attainment of this objective in the states. But, under existing circumstances, the Congress is not in a position to work effectively to this end within the states, and numerous limitations

and restrictions imposed by the rulers, or by British authority working through them, hamper its activities. The hope and assurance which its name and great prestige raise in the minds of the people of the states find no immediate fulfilment, and disillusion results. It is not in consonance with the dignity of the Congress to have local committees which cannot function effectively, or to tolerate indignity to the National Flag. The inability of the Congress to give protection or effective help when hopes have been raised, produced helplessness in the people of the states and hinders the development of their movement for freedom.

"In view of the different conditions prevailing in the states and the rest of India, the general policy of the Congress is often unsuited to the states and may result in preventing or hampering the natural growth of a freedom movement in a state. Such movements are likely to develop more rapidly and to have a broader basis, if they draw their strength from the people of the state, produce self-reliance in them, and are in tune with the conditions prevailing there, and do not rely on extraneous help and assistance or on the prestige of the Congress name. The Congress welcomes such movements, but in the nature of things and under present conditions, the burden of carrying on the struggle for freedom must fall on the people of the states. The Congress will always extend its goodwill and support to such struggles carried on in a peaceful and legitimate manner, but that organizational help will inevitably be, under existing conditions, moral support and sympathy. Individual Congressmen, however, will be free to render further assistance in their personal capacities.

In this way the struggle can develop without committing the Congress organization, and thus unhindered by external considerations.

"The Congress, therefore, directs that, for the present, Congress Committees in the states shall function under the direction and control of the Congress Working Committee and shall not engage in parliamentary activity nor launch on direct action in the name and under the auspices of the Congress. Internal struggle of people of the states must not be undertaken in the name of the Congress. For this purpose independent organizations should be started and continued where they exist already within the states. The Congress desires to assure the people of the states of its solidarity with them and of its active and vigilant interest in and sympathy with their movement of freedom. It trusts that the day of their deliverance is not far distant."\*

Referring to the Haripura Congress resolution on the states, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya says in the *History of the Congress* that a section of the Congress and Gandhiji did not see eye to eye with each other on the problem of the states and the attitude of the Congress towards the political awakening in them. As early as in 1934 when Gandhiji published a statement on the 6th of April, he made a reference to socialism and the states as well as the constitution of the Congress as the points on which he had distinctive views in opposition to those entertained by one wing in the Congress. "Part of the difficulty arose from the fact that the people of the states were believed to be demanding external aid for internal agitation. They too put their house in order and organised their committees and met in an all-

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\* Harijan—26-2-1938.

India Conference in July, 1936, at Karachi.\* This was the beginning of a new chapter in the progress of the states people's politics on lines closely analogous to those adopted by the Congress. Associations sprang up everywhere and many of them affiliated to the All-India body. The praja mandals of certain states preferred to remain unconnected with outside organisations of states people much less with the Congress organisation. In some states there were Congress committees side by side with the states people's organisation.

Having gained an inch in Calcutta the people of the States aspired to an ell in later years. They wanted the Congress to bear the burden of the people in the states or at any rate take the responsibility for the political organisations of the states people. The Congress on the contrary, had its own difficulties to contend against. The issue that arose at Haripura was whether Congress committees should be permitted in the states and whether the Congress constitution of India's provinces should not be equally acceptable to the people of the states. An easy way out of the difficulty was considered by the states people's organisation which had just met at a convention at Navsari prior to the Haripura session to be to make one change in Article I of the constitution by stating that *India* means *the people of India* including the people of the Indian states. It will also be remembered that the resolution on Mysore passed by AICC in Calcutta in October, 1937, did not commend itself to Gandhiji who criticised it in severe terms.\*\*\*

People of the states and leaders of the freedom movement in those territories did not, generally speaking, react favourably to this resolution. Though none questioned the solicitude of the Congress for the states people's welfare, they could not help feeling, firstly, that it was they and not

\* Details of the Karachi session of All India states People's Conference are given in a subsequent chapter.

\*\* History of the Congress—Vol II, P 79

Congress leaders who felt the pinch of oppressive rule, and, secondly, that the Congress attached greater importance to the fortunes of the struggle it was waging against the British authority than to the unequal fight that praja mandals were giving to the rulers in the states. Gandhiji's writings on the resolution and clarificatory statements by Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, however, somewhat soothed the feelings of the states people.

Meanwhile the praja mandals and the All-India States People's Conference were discovering new sources of strength and their following was increasing every day. A radical left wing had developed within the Congress; which started advocating more active support for Satyagraha movements in the states. Jawaharlal Nehru, Jaya Prakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev, Yusuf Mehrali and a few others in the Congress missed no opportunity to uphold the cause of the states people. Jawaharlal, who was foremost among them, came out with clear and effective statements denouncing the chaotic conditions prevailing in states. These pronouncements had the effect of committing the Congress, at least in the view of the people, to a more radical policy towards the agitations going on in several states.

The Congress Ministries in the provinces also took up an attitude which lent support to the agitators in the states. Gandhiji again declared in December, 1938 that there was no half-way house between total extinction of the states and responsible government. The simultaneous awakening in the states he attributed to the "time spirit." He also put a new interpretation on the duties and responsibilities of provincial governments vis-a-vis the agitation for responsible government in the states. He held that Ministers in the provinces had the moral right and duty to take notice of gross misrule in the states and to advise the Paramount Power on what should be done. Gandhiji went to the extent

of announcing that unless the substance of the demand for responsible government was conceded voluntarily by the rulers, the Congress policy of non interference might be abandoned. He also advised the rulers to cultivate friendly relations "with an organisation which bids fair in the future, not very distant, to replace the Paramount Power—let me hope, by friendly arrangement"\*

These words of Gandhiji have proved prophetic, though at the time they were uttered perhaps no state ruler took them seriously. Addressing the princes some months later the Mahatma posed the question "what is the minimum that all states should guarantee in order to come in line with the enlightened opinion in what is called British India"? Answering it himself he laid down the following as the minimum that all states, big or small, must do —

- 1 Full civil liberty, so long as it is not used to promote violence directly or indirectly. This includes freedom of the Press and freedom to receive newspapers which do not promote violence.
- 2 Freedom to the people of the states to form associations and educate public opinion in favour of establishing responsible government in their own states
- 3 Freedom for Indians outside particular states to enter them without let or hindrance so long as their activities are not directed towards the destruction of the states in question
4. The privy purse should be limited so as not to exceed one-tenth of the income where it ranges between Rs 10 and Rs 15 lakhs per year, and in no case should the purse exceed Rs 3 lakhs per year, and it should include all the private expenses

of the ruler (e. g., palace expenses, cars, stables, the ruler's guests) except those which have reference to the performance of public duty which should be clearly defined.

5. Judiciary to be independent and permanent and free of all interference. In order to ensure uniformity of practice and strict impartiality there should be an appeal to the High Court of the province within which the state in question is situated. This may not be possible without a change in the law governing the High Courts. It can, I imagine, be easily altered if the states agree."\*

In the same article in which he posed this question and answered it, Gandhiji addressed a few words to the princes. Concluding his article he asked the princes "not to under-rate the Congress as a force in the country."

If these developments were giving a new slant to the Congress policy on non-interference in the internal affairs of the states, the happenings in Rajkot leading to Mahatma Gandhi's fast and the subsequent intervention by the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, confirmed the change that circumstances had brought about in the Congress policy on the one hand and the attitude of the Paramount Power on the other, at any rate so far as the smaller states were concerned. It also served to prove that the Congress had gained in prestige since taking up office in the provinces, so that even the Viceroy was not impervious to its wishes. When the agitation developed, Rajkot was inundated by volunteers from Bombay Presidency which was under Congress administration. The provincial government was unwilling to interfere with the agitators based in Bombay. Unable to check the spate of agitators coming from outside

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\* M. K. Gandhi—The Indian States Problem—Pp, 342-43,



and finding its appeal for help to the Paramount Power unavailing, the Thakore and the Dewan of Rajkot had to succumb eventually

The whole affair developed into a major crisis which neither the Government of Bombay nor the Paramount Power could ignore. This was a clear indication for the states people that the Congress was fully at their back in their demand for responsible government in the states. There is evidence to show that some of the princes also saw the writing on the wall, just as Lord Linlithgow himself saw that unless some radical reforms were brought about in the states, it would only be a question of time before they succumbed to Congress agitation.

There can be no doubt that if World War II had not intervened and the Congress administrations in the provinces had continued for another few years the move to consolidate the princely territories with British India which Sardar Patel started in 1947 after Independence, would almost certainly have begun at least seven years earlier.

Things had started moving in the right direction. The Congress by virtue of the power it wielded in six and at one time eight provinces had become a force to reckon with. Even the Crown Representative and the Political Department were forced to pause before they did anything on the states front which the Congress as an organisation might dislike. This healthy trend was suddenly interrupted by the declaration of war in Europe in September, 1939, leading to the resignation of the Congress Ministries in the provinces and a free hand to the Paramount Power to own up the princes once again by assuring them of full protection. The princes, in turn, reverted to their earlier attitude as regards their people and their demand for responsible government. The emergency created by the war situation came handy to

them to go back on whatever assurances they might have given to their people and to jog on merrily as hitherto.

The threads were picked up again in 1946 when negotiations for states representation in the Constituent Assembly started. Earlier, Jawaharlal had made a remarkable speech at Udaipur at the All-India States People's Conference. He had also presided over the Ludhiana session of this conference in 1939 and taken active part in the Karachi session held in the previous year. The speeches he had made on those occasions were no less memorable. But at Udaipur he spoke not merely as a politician and public leader but as a statesman and a practical administrator, since a few months earlier he had joined the Viceroy's Executive Council as its Vice-chairman. He pleaded for responsible government in all states. Such states as could not possibly form economic units, he thought, should be absorbed in the neighbouring provinces and not with other states.

During the discussions that ensued on the question of political reforms in India with the Labour Government coming into power in the United Kingdom, the question of the Indian States was always taken up by the Congress in all discussions. We have already seen that the Cripps Mission's reference to states was rather brief and sketchy. The Cripps Plan merely stated: "Whether or not an independent state elects to adhere to the constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements so far as they may be required in the new situation." The states were to send their representatives to the constitution-making body in proportion to their population. It was also made clear that the British Government would not transfer the Paramountcy of the Crown to any other party. Though the Cripps Mission had failed, it served to make one thing plain, to the princes; and that was that in the event of a conflict between the interests of the states and British India, the

British Government would care more for the latter and would not mind leaving the states and the princes high and dry

Attempts were made in 1944-45 at forming a separate union of all the states, but it was so impracticable that not only the Congress and the states people rejected it, even the Viceroy was known to have disfavoured it. Lord Linlithgow, instead, launched his Attachment Scheme under which certain semi-jurisdictional states in Kathiawar and Gujarat were attached to the neighbouring states. A similar treatment he suggested for the Orissa states

With the ending of the war the emphasis shifted to internal problems, and the constitutional questions again came to the fore. The talks which the Labour Government in U.K. initiated were followed by a visit of the Parliamentary Delegation and later of the Cabinet Mission to India. In his statement of March, 15, 1946, the British Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, made it plain that "there can be no positive veto on advance and I do not believe for a moment that the Indian princes would desire to be a bar to the forward march of India". There was hectic activity during the stay of the Cabinet Mission in the country. There were endless rounds of conferences, meetings and interviews, but the Mission did not interview the people of the states. The Mission was, however, quite clear in its mind that with the attainment of independence by British India whether within or outside the British Commonwealth, the relationship which had hitherto existed between the states and the British Crown would no longer be possible. It, therefore, advised the states to seek new relationship with the successor government of India and in case India was partitioned to accede to one of the Dominions. They also advised them to join the Constituent Assembly, for which a Negotiating Committee had been set up. In the Memorandum on States Treaties and Paramountcy, the Cabinet Mission said that with effect from the date of the transfer of power, His

Majesty's Government would cease to exercise the powers of Paramountcy.

The Congress stand throughout had been that in the Constituent Assembly representatives of the people rather than nominees of the rulers should be sent. This view was supported by Gandhiji personally and also the Congress Working Committee. The arrangement made eventually did give some say to the states people in returning their representatives to the Constituent Assembly.

During this period of activity following the visit of the Cabinet Mission to India, rulers of certain states tried to form regional unions, for example, the rulers of the Deccan states and of Gujarat states. But no attempt was made to ascertain the wishes of the people and enlist their support by the princes. When the rulers approached Mahatma Gandhi for his blessings, he discouraged them point-blank on the plea that it was no use their forming any union unless every prince had conferred responsible government on his people individually.

Finally came the famous announcement of Jawaharlal Nehru while addressing the annual and the last session of the All-India States People's Conference in April, 1947. He declared that any state which did not come into the Constituent Assembly would be treated by the country as a hostile state. Such a state, he added, would have to bear the consequences of being so treated.\*

The states people were fully satisfied with the stand taken by the Congress and its top leaders with regard to their future. At no stage during the protracted negotiations between the British Government, the Government of India, the rulers' representatives and the Muslim League did the Congress ever lose sight of the interests of the states people and their desire to be equal participants in the freedom that was soon going to descend on India.

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\* V. P. Menon—Page 75-76,

## Indian States' People's Conference

Let us look back and go to the days when the people of the states were still struggling to have an all-India organisation of their own. Current trends in the states and the country in general during the twenties were unmistakably pointing to the need of setting up a central organisation which might be representative of all the people living in Indian states and which might take up their cause of civil liberties and responsible government. As we have seen, public bodies had already been set up in some of the states. Most of them flourished for a time and sooner or later all fell victims to the rulers' displeasure. They had, however, served one great purpose. They had helped the process of educating the people of the states and making them conscious of their political rights. Popular agitations led to the repression of the people by the rulers and the repression, in turn, fanned the fire of discontent, lending the much-needed strength to people's will to resist.

As the movement gathered strength, it entered another phase. So far individual states had their separate praja mandals concentrating on political work in their respective territories. As mutual consultations became more frequent, the community of interest asserted itself. Different praja

mandals now joined hands to form regional political conferences or praja mandals. Thanks to the healthy and effective leadership, this move soon gathered momentum.

The establishment of the Decan States Conference, the Kathiawar States Political Conference, the Rajputana Seva Sangh were manifestations of that trend. Such organisations working for the political rights of the people of one state or of groups of states carried the agitation for reforms almost to the level had been achieved in British India by the Congress. Conferences of the people of individual states such as the Sangli States People's Conference, the Bhore Political Conference, the Bhavnagar Praja Parishad, the Cutch Praja Parishad, the Hyderabad State People's Conference, the Janjira State Subjects Conference, the Miraj State People's Conference and the Idar Praja Parishad were an expression of the new spirit. That such organisations of individual states should lead to joint deliberation of common problems among states belonging to one region or one geographical group, was only natural.

There had existed in the past a placidity and complacency among the people of the Indian states, at least on surface. The comparative absence of all healthy public activities in the states had kept the people chained down to passive sufferance; but after 1920, there occurred events which disturbed these citadels of conservatism and absolutism. All unnatural barriers were broken, the spirit of enquiry and wonder had taken the place of placidity and torpor, feelings of uneasiness and healthy discontent had begun to rise both in official and non-official quarters and a strange yearning for constitutional government and the rule of law had possessed the soul of the intelligentsia. The desire to enjoy rights similar to those that were being enjoyed on an ever-increasing scale by their brethren in British India, and eagerness to march hand in hand with them in the race for progress had stirred the hearts of the people. This transformation was visible

in later years in the sessions of the States' People's Conference that began to be held along with the Indian National Congress sessions almost every year, and in the increasing interest that was being taken by the Indian as well as the British Press in this problem by devoting more space to it instead of relegating it to a back page as was done in the earlier days

At the time the second round of the States People's movement began, a number of public organisations of the states people were based in British India. As people hailing from various states met and discussed their problems, they began to moot the idea of having an All India organisation to represent them just as the Indian National Congress represented the people of British India and voiced their feelings and aspirations.

There were several factors which persuaded the states people to go ahead with their plans. The first non co-operation movement launched by the Congress in 1920 had sent a wave of enthusiasm among them to follow the example of their brethren living in British India. Though the Congress spoke only for the provinces and kept aloof so far as the demands of the states people were concerned defiance of authority and the actual launching of civil disobedience by Congressmen inspired the people living in the states. While demanding freedom for India speakers at political conferences held in the provinces made no distinction between British and Indian India. In this respect, the states people knew and felt that the freedom struggle which the Congress was waging did not altogether leave the states territories untouched. Then, Gandhiji's leadership attracted many states people to the Congress standard. Along with the people of British India they also worked for the Congress, courted imprisonment and underwent other kinds of sufferings. It was, therefore, natural that the states people should feel emboldened to

have a parallel organisation of their own so that they might wage a similar struggle against their rulers.

Secondly, the refusal of the Indian National Congress to be drawn directly into the states people's grievances impelled the latter to stand on their own feet and to think in terms of their own organisation. They knew that the Congress was sympathetic towards them and that for only tactical reasons it was not in a position to take up cudgels on behalf of the states people.

This attitude of the Congress proved a boon for the states people who were driven to strive to organise a forum where they could discuss their own problems. Whatever their reaction to the attitude of the Congress towards their demands, they were now convinced that the struggle for responsible government and civil liberties in the states would have to be conducted by themselves. To this end the people of the states now addressed themselves in all earnestness.

Thirdly, the repeal of the Press Act and subsequent amendments which made seditious writings against the princes punishable deprived the states people of their best helper and supporter, namely, the Press in British India.\*

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\* Referring to the repeal of the Press Act and enactment of the Princes Protection Act which followed it, C.Y. Chintamani in his "Indian Politics since the Mutiny" asks "Protection from whom and from what? In the vast majority of states even elementary political rights are denied to the people. They have no right of public meeting, no free press, no representative institutions, no independent judiciary. The Indian States People's Conference has to assemble in British India. For the ventilation of grievances the people of the states have to depend in the main upon the Press of British India. The princes as a whole have given no evidence of a change of political mentality. Every time they insist upon the retention of absolute power in their hands. Yet, far from persuading them to redress the grievances of their subjects and to grant to them a modicum of political rights, the Government of India have twice come to their rescue by means of legislative measures to 'protect' them from criticism in the press of British India". (page 110)



The British Indian Press was hitherto the only power that exercised some check on the princes because of its wide influence and also because of the fact that there was no effective Press or public opinion in the states and their affairs could not be discussed in the legislatures of British India. It is a significant fact that in their long history the states could not boast of having a single popular independent daily newspaper. Freedom of the Press was looked upon by them as a step too revolutionary to be compatible with their aims and ideals. Having thus no other alternative, the states people decided to set up an institution of their own to voice their feelings and ventilate their grievances.

Fourthly, the publication of the Montagu Chelmsford reforms proposed to be introduced in British India surcharged the political atmosphere in the states. Whatever the immediate reaction of the people of British India to these reforms, it could not be denied that the proposals meant a substantial advance politically and administratively. The dyarchy of which British Indian public leaders were so critical excited the envy of the people living in the states. The Viceregal pronouncements that followed and the inauguration of the Chamber of Princes\* were important steps, politically speaking. These steps could not but have their repercussions among the people of the states. The only fitting reply to the establishment of the Chamber of Princes could be the setting up of an All-India political organisation by the people of the states.

Thus the setting up of an organisation representing all the states' people became an absolute necessity. It had become all the more imperative because the princely order, after the birth of the Chamber of Princes, had started

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\* The Chamber of Princes was inaugurated by the Duke of Connaught in Delhi's Red Fort in Feb. 1921.

stressing the need for revision of political practice leading to their direct relationship with the Crown. Their move to seek special protection and immunity from public criticism in British India meant the closing down of the only medium through which the states people could ventilate their grievances.

At the invitation of the secretaries of the Deccan States Association, a number of prominent workers interested in the Indian states met on 5th March, 1922, in the premises of the Servants of India Society at Poona. N. C. Kelkar opened the proceedings and pleaded that progress in the Indian states was essential for the progress of the country as a whole. He explained how new problems were cropping up relating to the people of the Indian states and how greatly they were suffering under ante-diluvian systems of administration, the worst being entirely feudal in character and the best of them being no better than enlightened despotism. The question of forming an all-India Council of States was taken up and it was decided to hold an all-India States People's Conference after a few months.

The questions which this meeting had raised, however, continued to be discussed in one form or another for four years. These years were certainly educative in so far as they brought the problems of the people into the limelight and created a tremendous amount of consciousness among them. But as regards the creation of an all-India body, efforts were still far from successful and the feeling of suppressed disappointment persisted.

The next step forward in that direction was taken only in 1926. Again the question of convening an all-India States People's Conference was mooted. The meeting considered various items in connection with organisational work. They published a manifesto in which they declared, *inter alia*, that the ideal of a federated India in which the British provinces

and the Indian states were to be united on a footing of equality, could be based only on a deeper public consciousness of political advance in the states than had been the case so far. They expressed the view that the people of Indian states must obtain political and representative institutions and forms of government calculated reasonably to place them on a par with the rest of the federating India. The meeting decided to convene a conference of all states people in January, 1927. As this resolution could not be implemented, workers of the Indian states again met in April, 1927, and held the usual discussions. By now the Simon Commission had been appointed and this fact had given a new turn to events in the states and lent urgency to the task of having an accredited organisation of the states people. The workers' conference prepared a representation to be laid before the Commission, embodying the aim of political advance in the Indian states and suggesting the ways and means by which the said aim could be accomplished. The meeting adopted the following manifesto which it got published under the signatures of those present:

'The principal aims of such a Conference of the people of all Indian states should be to demand and secure that Indian states should be regarded as integral parts of a common Indian nation, on a par with the principal provinces of what is known as British India in all national matters, and founded on the basic principles of responsibility in government and representativeness in their governing institutions, similar to that prevailing in British India, under the aegis of their respective rulers''

Representatives of the states people met from time to time and began to work for organising the all-India States People's Conference. After considerable delay caused by

various factors, it was possible to call a meeting of the Working Committee of the states people only on November, 20, 1927 under the chairmanship of G. B. Trivedi. Twenty-six workers from different parts of the country, supposed to be constituting the Working Committee of the states people, attended the conference. The principal subject of discussion was naturally the formation of an all-India organisation and the convening of its first meeting. At the invitation of this committee, Balwantray Mehta, representing Bhavnagar State and Secretary of the Bhavnagar States People's Conference, offered to devote all his time and energy to the organisation of the conference, which was decided to be held in the third week of December.

The intervening months were a period of hectic activity. The sub-committee took up the allotted work in right earnest and organised a number of conferences at the state and regional level.\* Balwantray Mehta's indefatigable efforts and well-coordinated work provided the much-needed guidance to the people of various states. The Press was flooded with pamphlets, leaflets and bulletins issued from Mehta's office. From the platform and the Press, popular attention was focussed on the grievances and aspirations of the people of the states. The country was awakened to a sense of responsibility towards 70 million of their brethren living in states, most of them leading a miserable existence. Much sympathy was roused in the provinces for the cause of the states people.

With the background thus well prepared the first session of the All-India States People's Conference was held on the 17th December, 1927, in Bombay. More than 1,500 people attended it. Of these 750 were members of the

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\* For example, soon after political conferences were held by the people of Orissa states, Kathiawad states, Deccan states and of Travancore.

Reception Committee, the rest being delegates and visitors representing more than 70 states. Dewan Bahadur Ram Chandra Rao presided over the first session and Gobindlal Shirlal Motilal was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. The presidential address and the welcome speech of the Chairman of the Reception Committee explained the aims and objects of the conference and thereafter gave typical illustrations of the autocracy and corruption that prevailed in the states. Motilal emphasised the necessity for a Supreme Court of appeal with a view to having a check on the judgements of the courts in the states, which he thought would be the first concrete and tangible step to bring democratic government within the reach of the states people. He suggested that all the smaller states should unite on a democratic basis.

Ram Chandra Rao in his presidential address touched on the problem of defence, the fiscal and opium policy of the British Government, lending his support to Government of India's policy. He drew a lurid picture of the conditions prevailing in the states and put in a forceful plea for the appointment of an enquiry committee to look into the states people's grievances. Rao exhorted the states people to secure the co-operation of all political organisations in British India. He said:

"I refuse to believe that there is anybody in the Indian states, be he a prince or a peasant, who will not whole heartedly subscribe to these ideals and who will not do his best to realise them. A large vision of Indian political destiny has permeated all classes of people throughout India and on this main question there is and there can be absolutely no differences between the people of British India and the Indian states. A free, strong, united self-governing and self-supporting India is our aim and ideal. In familiarising the people of the states with

our national ideals your services are, therefore, invaluable and this Conference is doing its best to bring the states into general harmony with the political developments in British India. The Indian National Congress, the Muslim League, the National Liberal Federation, the Hindu Mahasabha and other political organisations in British India are now actively engaged in examining the question of a new constitution for India. The All-India Congress Committee has charged the Working Committee of the Congress to frame a scheme in consultation with the various political parties in the country. I sincerely hope that this committee and the other political organisations will not content themselves with framing proposals relating only to British India leaving the position of the Indian states in the new Constitution undefined. This will be very unfortunate. It is, therefore, very desirable that the executive committee of this Conference should secure the cooperation of the political organisations in British India without any delay and collaborate with them in devising a new constitutional character for the whole of India."

The first session of the All-India States People's Conference was a remarkable success. It brought on surface the popular demand for responsible government and civil liberties in Indian states. The representatives of various states gave expression to their views regarding the difficulties and problems the states people were facing. Jaya Narayan Vyas of Jodhpur emphasised that the chief aim of the Conference should be the demand for responsible government in Indian states through representative institutions under the aegis of the rulers. D. V. Gokhale warned the rulers against the danger of alienating their subjects. He

said that the rulers must realise that they existed to serve the interest of their people, otherwise their ultimate fate would be the same as had been that of autocrats all over the world. Amritlal Thakar, Jamnalal Bajaj and Manaklal Kothari emphasised the need for setting up organisations in all the states for carrying out constructive work of Khaddar, temperance and the uplift of the backward classes. Atiya Begum asked for a public proclamation by the princes giving to the people the right of free speech, free press and security of person and property to all. Manilal Kothari criticised the rulers, particularly of Alwar and Idar, who denied rights to their people and who followed in practice the theory of the Divine Right of Kings.

Some of the delegates demanded the establishment of popular assemblies in states on an elective basis and also the separation of public revenues from the privy purse of the princes. Ram Narain Chaudhri and Raghavendra Rao declared that it was the inherent right of the people to determine the form and character of their government. Dayalal Purohit demanded that the people of Indian states should be assigned a definite place and given an effective voice in all matters connected with the new constitution that might be devised for the whole of India. Prof. G. R. Abhyankar said that the plea advanced by the Indian princes that they had treaty obligations to the British Crown wholly independent of the Government of India was devoid of any basis in fact. The move of the princes to circumvent the Government of India, he said, was detrimental to the interests of the people.

Shivdas Champai in his speech criticised the appointment of the Butler Committee for determining the status of the princes, while Arjun Lal Sethi, B. S. Pathik and G. B. Trivedi also opposed the appointment of the Butler Committee at the request of the princes. They declared

that the findings and conclusions of the committee would not be acceptable to the states people. Arjun Lal Sethi asked the Congress to take up the question of the states people and not to allow the Butler Committee to interfere with the Indian affairs. He appealed to the people to give a fitting reply to the Simon Commission and the Butler Committee by having nothing to do with them

B. S. Pathik made a detailed statement about the personal lives of the Maharajas of Patiala and Alwar and the orgies indulged in by them. Popat Lal Chudger welcomed the Paramount Power's interference in the internal affairs of the states, but, he said, this policy of interference was not based on any definite principles and had no rationale about it, except, perhaps, protecting imperialist interests. These principles should be properly codified and published. He added that it was the right of every state subject to think in terms of revolt against misrule in any state. It was the duty of the Crown to interfere in a state's internal affairs in order to remove the legitimate grievances of the people.

The system of *begar*, the tendency of the princes to spend most of their time in European capitals and the system of education in Rajkumar colleges also came in for severe criticism at the hands of many speakers.



## Aftermath of First Session

The first meeting of the All-India States People's Conference had set the tone of the agitation for ending the personal and autocratic rule in the states. The conference deputed two of its leaders, Manilal Kothari and B. S. Pathik to meet the Congress leaders and secure the active support of *that organisation for the states people's demand*. As a result of this effort, the Madras Congress Session (December, 1927) adopted, for the first time in the history of the Congress, a resolution endorsing the demand of the states people for responsible government. This resolution received such overwhelming support from all quarters that moving it year after year became a convention, leading to the reiteration by the Congress of its support to the states people in its annual sessions at Calcutta, Lahore, Karachi, etc.

The active interest displayed by the Nehru Committee in the affairs of the states people and the clear stand it took on this issue, can also be traced to the public opinion created by the States People's Conference, and the activities of its leaders. The Nehru Report was not unfair to the princes either. It had provided a new forum for discussion and invited the princes, the states people and other sections of

public opinion to meet at a common platform in order to find an acceptable solution of the states problem. This effort of the Indian leaders to find an equitable solution was not only rejected but openly ridiculed by the princes, who thought it was *infra dig* for them to sit at the same table where representatives of their subjects also sat. They were keen only to safeguard their own interests and were unwilling to give any thought to the demands of their people.

Having met another refusal at the hands of the Butler Committee to give a hearing to their deputation the states people could see how active the Chamber of Princes and individual rulers were in England to influence the members of the Butler Committee. Following in their foot-steps and in order to undo their propaganda, the All-India States People's Conference also decided to send a deputation of its representatives to England. This deputation did a yeoman service to the cause of the states people by informing the British public of the real state of affairs prevailing in the states. The deputation met members of the British Parliament, prominent public men and newspaper men and addressed many public meetings. On the whole, their cause struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the British public.

The delegates also prepared a memorandum and submitted it to the British public. This document aroused a great deal of sympathy and support for the states people's cause in British political circles. It was a powerful plea for the recognition of the rights of the people, which the princes supported by the Paramount Power were determined to brush aside. The claim of the princes, floating about by the dozen in London's fashionable hotels, that they represented their people was exploded. Before returning to India the States People's deputation set up a committee to work in London for educating the British public opinion and to act as the agency of the States People's Conference there.

One of the outstanding successes of the States People's Conference was that it put the case of the states people so forcefully and yet so objectively that they succeeded in raising this question above party politics. Their cause received spontaneous support from all educated sections of Indian opinion. It was supported alike by the Indian National Congress and the National Liberal Federation as also other detached organisations and public men of prominence. Besides Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Jamnalal Bajaj, Satyamurti and many others in the Congress, the States People's Conference had the good luck of enjoying full sympathy and active support from non-Congress leaders like Srinivas Sastri, C. Y. Chintamani, Amritlal Thakkar of the Servants of India Society, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, etc.

The fact that the All-India States People's Conference had come to represent in the country's political life a weighty and important interest, is proved by its participating as a separate organisation in the All-Parties Conference held at Calcutta in 1928. It was represented by a delegation of 8 members appointed by the Conference. The delegation took part in all discussions and accorded its whole-hearted support to the Nehru Report and the constitutional provisions made therein.

In sharp contrast to the attitude of the political circles in British India was the reaction of the princes to the establishment and activities of the All-India States People's Conference. The princes were furious and felt evidently piqued to see their own subjects going to the length of agitating against their rulers not only within the country but also in England. Their attitude, never sympathetic to the demands of their people, further hardened as a result of the activities of the Praja Mandals operating as wings of the States People's Conference. The immediate cause of their

anger was that their false pretensions of being progressive and benevolent rulers were exposed by their own subjects. The princes lost faith and earned a good deal of odium as being not only retrograde and autocratic rulers but also as men of low moral fibre and wayward disposition.

There were a number of exposures during those fateful years following the first session of the All-India States People's Conference. But we shall take the two most important of them, the cases of the rulers of Jamnagar and Patiala, both of whom put forth tall claims in India and abroad that they were progressive and responsible rulers. Both of them were in a way among the pillars of the Chamber of Princes. Their exposure dealt a severe blow to the prestige of the Chamber and generally of the Princely order.

In Jamnagar, a number of oppressive laws had been enacted restricting people's liberty and creating trade monopolies in the state. The freedom of exporting and importing commodities was so restricted as to turn commerce almost into a Government department. All protests and petitions having failed to get redress, the States People's Conference took up the cause of the people of Jamnagar. They organised protest meetings and started a campaign against the state administration in the Press. When a prominent member of the public put up a petition to Jam Sahib, representing the people's grievances, the Jam Sahib clapped the petitioner in jail. This only served to exacerbate feelings and fan the fires of the agitation. As the pressure of public opinion increased, the petitioner was eventually released, but the Jam Sahib denied that there were any oppressive laws or that a system of monopoly operated in the state as alleged. This led to the appointment of an enquiry committee by the Jamnagar Praja Mandal, under the chairmanship of Jamna Das Mehta.

The Darbar quickly placed a ban on the entry of the committee in the state. However, the committee laboured hard to collect evidence and was able to publish its report. The report proved conclusively that the allegations made by the public were correct. When the Jam Sahib returned from England, a black flag demonstration was organised on his arrival to greet him.

These activities while they put heart among the suffering people, exposed the terrorising activities of the state. They served also to prove that the boast of the princes that they were popular rulers and enjoyed the goodwill of their people was baseless. All that they cared for, it was now evident, were their own rights and privileges and not the welfare of their subjects. Several other states set up similar enquiry committees the reports of all of which brought to light the misdeeds of the princes and the harrowing tales of sufferings of the states people.

### The Patiala Happenings

The happenings in Patiala state were of a still more serious nature. If the gravamen of people's complaints in Jamnagar was economic stranglehold by the state Government, the people of Patiala had the misfortune of having a cursed and indifferent administration headed by a ruler who had no moral compunctions and who looked upon the state as no more than a means to satisfy his lust and personal whims.

The attention of the office of the All India States People's Conference was drawn towards happenings in Patiala by a large number of memorials received from the people of that state. Many of these were copies of the memorials sent to the Government of India earlier but without any effect. The foremost complaint was that there was no security of personal property. There were no representative institutions in this premier state of the Punjab, in

spite of the so-called directive of the Chamber of Princes to set up representative institutions in the states. To cap it all, the Maharaja of Patiala happened to be at the time Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, and he himself was setting such an example in his state. Secondly, there were grave charges against the Maharaja which involved moral turpitude, instability of character and extreme indifference to the well-being of the people, reference to which has been made earlier. For about a year the people continued to raise their voice of protest in British Indian Press through political organisations like the Congress, but it was the States People's Conference which espoused their cause and inspired their confidence. The AISPC brought out a leaflet captioned "A cry from Patiala" which drew popular attention to the misdeeds of the ruler and the sufferings of the people of that state. It pointed to the need of a thorough and sifting enquiry into allegations made by the people against the ruler and his administration.

The AISPC eventually appointed a committee of enquiry headed by Amritlal Thakkar and with Abhyankar and Amritlal Seth as members.\* The Working Committee of the AISPC reconstituted the enquiry committee in 1935. It appointed N. V. Gadgil as Chairman and Balwantray Mehta, Mulraj Kursondas and Amritlal Sheth as members. This committee examined numerous witnesses and went through a plethora of complaints and allegations. After a good deal of sifting and sorting out of material and acquiring personal knowledge of the situation, the committee produced its report, known as "The Indictment of Patiala."\* The booklet contained very serious charges against the Patiala Maharaja and his government. A *prima facie* case was made out for further investigation by the Paramount Power.

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\* See also chapter VIII,

The committee challenged the Maharaja to clear his character in a court of law

The report created a sensation and was widely reviewed in the Press and taken note of by the public. Balwantray Mehta, General Secretary of the AISPC was entrusted with the task of meeting Indian members of the Central Legislative Assembly at New Delhi with a view to interesting them in this affair. Naturally there was a flutter in princely circles because their Chancellor had been publicly condemned and indicted. But the princes were interested more in the prestige of their order than in the administration of justice or the redress of the people's grievances. Their reply to the publication of this booklet was to re-elect the Maharaja of Patiala as Chancellor for the second term.

The *Indictment of Patiala* proved to be a highly useful weapon in the hands of the AISPC. Balwantray Mehta went round on an extensive tour of the Punjab and Meghna of the Bombay Presidency, with a view to publicising allegations contained in the booklet and asking the people to help the unfortunate victims of the Patiala state. They worked up public opinion to such an extent that the Maharaja of Patiala had to face an angry black flag demonstration in Bombay when he went there en route to London to attend the Round Table Conference. He had to be taken by a devious route in order to board his boat. Incidentally, the same fate had overtaken the Maharaja of Alwar who was hooted down at a public meeting in Bombay, for he too had gained much notoriety because of his personal misdeeds, particularly because of the Nimoorchana massacre in which many people had lost their lives. The Maharaja had to leave the meeting under police escort.

However, the Maharaja of Patiala refused to be cowed down by the campaign of the AISPC and the publication of

the damaging book *Indictment of Patiala*. In a fit of bravado he came forward with a statement that he would launch proceedings against the authors of the report. The public and the AISPC waited for that moment and meanwhile prepared themselves to face the trial. Eventually, the Maharaja's threat turned out to be an empty bluster. Far from taking action against the authors of the report he quietly asked the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, to appoint his old acquaintance and kind friend, Fitz-patrick, to look into the matter and submit his report to the Crown Representative. This gentleman had no hesitation to give a clean chit to the Maharaja of Patiala after making a show of investigation. This official enquiry was held *in camera*. None knew anything about it except the officer who was holding it, the Maharaja of Patiala and his trusted senior officers. Though the enquiry was in the nature of a reply to the allegations made in the indictment, it never saw the light of the day. No one had the courage of publishing it. Only a gazette notification appeared exonerating the Maharaja of Patiala from the charges made against him.

Similar enquiries were held by the AISPC in respect of maladministration in several states, notably Alwar and Limbdi, all of which brought to light the sufferings of the people of the states. This activity naturally widened the scope of the work and influence of the AISPC. Another result, by no means unimportant, of these enquiries was that the attention of British Indian leaders of all schools of thought was now drawn towards the grievances of the states people and their demands for responsible government. As C. Y. Chintamani\* put it, it became impossible for any honest or conscious public man not to sympathise with the people of the states and not to lend his support to their demand for better and representative administration in the states.

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\* See excerpts from his Presidential address in Appendix A.



As facts regarding the real state of affairs in princely territories were unearthed and more and more people became acquainted with the ghastly conditions obtaining in states, the stature of the AISPC automatically grew. It came to be recognised as the sole accredited representative organisation of the people of all the native states of India

### Labour and Kisan Discontent

The conditions of labour in Indian states were very deplorable. Forced labour was in existence in most of these territories. Workers and peasants were groaning under oppressive labour laws and the de-humanising system of *begar*\*. When it came to be known that an Indian delegation was proceeding to Geneva to take part in the International Labour Conference, Balwantray Mehta was asked to prepare a memorandum on behalf of the AISPC to hand it over to B Shiva Rao, a member of the Indian delegation. Shiva Rao welcomed the material given to him and made good use of it at Geneva. Similarly, on the occasion of the Bombay Presidency Youth Conference at Ahmedabad in 1929, the AISPC sent a delegation under the leadership of Meghani representing the youth of the Indian states. It proved to be a valuable opportunity to discuss the question of Indian states. The delegation succeeded in its object and the youth conference not only deplored the conditions obtaining in Indian states but also adopted a resolution promising all help of the youth from British India to the Indian states youth in their struggle for responsible government.

On the political and constitutional plane, the conditions prevailing in Indian states at that time bore some resemblance to the conditions which prevailed in England towards the close of the 17th century. In England, a

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\* Forced labour without monetary compensation supposed to have the sanction of custom and age old conventions

Parliament and representative institutions existed, but the people were engaged in a grim fight to assert popular rights by reducing the power and arbitrary authority of the Crown. In Indian states, on the other hand, there were hardly any representative institutions but the people drew inspiration from what was happening in the provinces in their neighbourhood. They were also waging a fight, perhaps grimmer than the people of England had to do, against their rulers' autocracy. It is not, therefore, surprising if, as in England more than 200 years earlier, the Indian states too thought of popularising and propagating their cause through pamphlets, books and booklets. The AISPC became the spearhead of this activity. It encouraged the authors to bring out publications which might expose the administration of the states and further the cause of the Conference. In course of time the AISPC was able to discover its own Hobbes, Swifts, Walpoles and Burkes.

### Books and Pamphlets

The first book of the series appeared in 1929. It was a treatise on political practice. It cleared much of the fog which had gathered round the so-called treaty rights of the princes. The theory of direct relationship with the Crown and the so-called sovereignty of the states were shown in their right perspective. The book presented a picture of the nature and extent of treaty rights of some of the princes.

The fantastic scheme of Sir Leslie Scott, the princes' advocate before the Butler Committee, also attracted a rejoinder by the AISPC. The Conference brought out a criticism of Sir Leslie Scott's scheme which exposed the general reactionary attitude of the princes towards all problems of constitutional and political import. The theory of direct relationship with the Crown led to the belief that

there were two Indias. It was condemned and rejected outright. '*Fears, prejudices and professions*' was another book which the Conference published, giving an interesting analysis of all that the princes had claimed and demanded at the Round Table Conference and in their statements bearing on the Indian federation.

Another publication of a descriptive, if satirical character which became very popular was *Navanagar of Prince Ranjee*. This book gave the inside story of the administration of the Jam Sahib of Navanagar. It was descriptive and analytical and written in an elegant style which drew praise from Sir P. S. Sivaswami Iyer and C. Y. Chintamani. It focussed attention on the dark nooks and recesses of Jamnagar and purported to expose the vaunted boast of a ruler who called himself an enlightened administrator.

Another excellent book which soon acquired reputation of being a standard work on states was written by P. L. Chudgar of Rajkot, one of the leading workers of AISPC. His work '*Indian Princes under British Protection*', gave in a nutshell a comprehensive account of the complex problems of the native states. This was supplemented by Prof. Abhyankar's '*Problems of Indian states*'. The AISPC could not have done better than sponsoring such publications for educating the public and acquainting people in British India with the woes of those living in the states. The contribution which this literature made in popularising the cause of the states people and enlisting for them the support of all sections of public opinion of the country cannot be exaggerated. The truth is that if the AISPC had done nothing beyond bringing out these publications its contribution towards solving the problem of the states would have been reckoned high, for this literature filled a great void and prepared the ground for the future struggle.

One important development which must be mentioned here was the emergence of a new party in the field, called the Indian States People's Republican League. This development was symptomatic of the time. So far the AISPC had been adopting resolutions, demanding responsible government in states under the aegis of the rulers. Most of the Congress leaders and Mahatma Gandhi were of the same view. As long as responsible government was assured, no one was very keen to do away with the princes. At least there was no animus against the institution of monarchy. Indian leaders, including leaders of the states people's movement envisaged that among the constituent units comprising the Indian federation of the future there will be some headed by hereditary monarchs and others by governors. But the stiff attitude of the princes, their theory of direct relationship with the Crown; which they placed before the Butler Committee, their hostile and unresponsive attitude towards the people's movement in the states and their determination to ride the high horse were responsible for gradual dissipation of the goodwill exhibited by popular leaders towards their persons and their dynasties. A left wing was developing in the Congress and a parallel development also took place in the ranks of the States People's Conference. Some of its leaders and workers felt that responsible government under the rulers will be a half-way house and, at any rate, the rulers themselves did not deserve it.

Therefore, they established a new party which stood for the liquidation of monarchical rule and complete liquidation of the princely order.

The coming into being of the new party was not altogether unwelcome to the AISPC. but it caused some concern because it was feared that it might split their forces and affect their political unity. As luck would have it, these fears proved to be exaggerated. Eventually, thanks to the rising

tempo of the states people's movement and the endless aberrations of the princes, the seeming gulf between the two parties disappeared. They converged at one point and that was the demand for responsible government in the states in order to bring them on the same political and constitutional level on which stood the provinces. The rest could be left to the future. Whether the states or groups of states should be under hereditary monarchs or governors, never became a live issue.

## Conference Makes Rapid Strides

Reference has already been made to the first session of the All-India States People's Conference, giving the background of the events which necessitated its establishment as also some account of the achievements which may be attributed to it. It was a timely beginning. The deteriorating state of affairs in the states, the widening contrast between conditions prevailing in the states and the provinces and the spate of constitution-making activities which began with the appointment of the Simon Commission and ended only with the enactment of the Government of India Act 1935, all these were responsible for giving the AISPC the status of an important political organisation. Not only in the eyes of the states people but also in the view of the Indian public as such and also the Government of India, though it was chary of recognising it, this organisation acquired the same importance and representative character vis-a-vis the Indian states which the Congress had long acquired in relation to British India.

The main achievement of the first session of AISPC was that it turned the organisation into a popular and running party. Its subsequent activities lent further

Several other resolutions, important and significant, were adopted. They urged on the rulers to establish representative institutions in their states, to improve the functioning of the judiciary, to have budgets presented and voted every year and to separate their privy purse from the general budget. Demands were also made that the princes should cease interfering with the administration of justice, and that constructive work like promoting cooperative societies and the uplift of backward classes should be encouraged. The conference resolved to appoint an executive committee of 30 members with permission to coopt another 30 members to implement the resolutions of the Congress and to promote its aims and objects.

The States People's Conference rendered a great deal of service to India as a whole by pinpointing public attention on the mischievous theory of 'two Indias' which the princes, blinded by self-interest, were advocating and which their paid supporters like Rushbrook Williams and Leslie Scott were assiduously propagating.

### Third session

The third session of the AISPC was again held in Bombay. It was presided over by Ramanand Chatterjee, Editor of the *Modern Review* and the Chairman of the Reception Committee was Lakshmi Das Raoji Tairsee. Those who attended represented a cross-section of public opinion in India, prominent among them being, Subash Chandra Bose, Smt. Kamla Nehru, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Shri and Smt. K. M. Munshi, Sir Lalu Bhai Sanwaldas, Nagin Das, T. Master, Jamna Das Mehta, Balwantray Mehta, Yusuf Meharali, G. R. Abhyankar, and many other leading lights of the Indian states.

Ramanand Chatterjee, in his presidential address put in a forceful plea for responsible government in the states

and appealed to the Indian princes to learn a lesson from the King of England who did not arrogate to himself the position of representative of his people. Following this material example, the rulers of Indian states should also behave as constitutional monarchs and redress the grievances of their subjects. He also made a pointed reference to the glaring contrast between the states and British India so far as civil liberties and the rule of law were concerned. Unless this gap was narrowed, the princes would continue to face resistance and popular agitation for reform in their respective territories. Ramanand Chatterjee made an impassioned appeal to the rulers to see the signs of the times and look upon themselves as constitutional heads of their states in sheer self-interest, if for no other reason.

The Chairman of the Reception Committee put in a strong plea for unity among subjects of all the states, so that they could agitate more effectively for the establishment of self-government within their respective territories. He said that unless the people of the states were guaranteed freedom of speech, thought and association and assured of personal safety with the right to appeal to the federal court, their aspirations were not likely to be satisfied. Tairsee appealed to the conference to hold its next session in some Indian state instead of meeting year after year in Bombay.

Prominent Congress leaders including Madan Mohan Malviya, Abdul Gaffar Khan, Smt. Kamla Nehru and others, addressed the conference. They assured the states people of their sympathy in their struggle and hoped that the princes would try to appreciate the people's aspirations and concede their legitimate demands.

The real insight into the mind of the Conference can be had only from the resolution which it adopted. The Conference repudiated the claims of the princes to represent



their people at the Round Table Conference or to act as their spokesmen. It demanded that representatives of the states people should be included among the delegates asked to attend the Round Table Conference. It appealed to all members of the R. T. C. in general and Mahatma Gandhi in particular, to take care of the interests of the people of the states as distinguished from those of the princes and requested the leaders to lay emphasis on the following essential points

1 The Federal Government should embrace within its ambit all subjects of all India concern that required uniformity of regulation. The Conference, while generally asking for extension of the range of federal power, wished to specify, among others, Civil and Criminal Law, Labour Legislation, Audit and Franchise, as subjects, which it was necessary to place on the Federal List in order to make the Federal Government sufficiently strong,

2 Administration of all federal subjects should generally be under the control of the Federal Executive,

3 No state joining the Federation should be allowed, as was proposed in certain quarters, to withdraw any subject from the scope of the Federal Government, so that subjects placed on the Federal list should be federal for all the states without any exception,

4 That all powers of Paramountcy exercised by the Government of India over the states should, under the new constitution, be vested in the Federal Government, and not in the Viceroy and an irresponsible Political Department

The conference also put forward the following as the minimum demands of the people of the states, without fulfilment of which all or any of the decisions arrived at the Round Table Conference would be unacceptable to them,—

1. Federal citizenship and fundamental rights for the people of the states to be embodied in the new constitution.

2. Federal judicial machinery to be provided in the constitution to protect the fundamental rights of the people of the states.

3. Direct representation of the people of the states in Central Legislatures by the same system of election and voting as might be provided for the people of British India.

4. The judiciary in the Indian states should be linked with the Federal Supreme Court which may form the Apex of the country's judicial system.

It declared its full confidence in Mahatma Gandhi and entrusted to his special care the minimum demands of the people of the states and requested him to insist on the acceptance of these minimum demands.

In another resolution the Conference drew the attention of the League of Nations to the system of forced labour still prevalent in many Indian states. The Conference criticised the rulers many of whom took little interest in the administration of their states and were most of the time travelling abroad, thus squandering state revenues and neglecting their responsibilities.

The Conference condemned the Chief of Miraj and other state rulers who had abused the provisions of the Foreigners Act adopted by the Government of India with a view to harassing Indian states workers who had taken part in the last national struggle. The AISPC asked for immediate amendment of the Act, so as to exclude Indian states people from the operation of the Act, particularly because the states were to be brought into a constitutional union with British India under the proposed federal scheme.

The Conference expressed its appreciation of the announcement made by the Chiefs of Aundh and Phaltan

declaring responsible government as the goal of their administrations and of their efforts towards progressive realisation of the same.

In another resolution the Conference appointed a committee with Balwantray Mehta as convener to draft the constitution of the AISPC. The Conference endorsed and approved of the resolution passed by the Working Committee, criticising the manner in which an enquiry had been ordered by the Paramount Power in the Patiala affair. It condemned the Government for not having suspended the Maharaja from his office and for appointing officers of the Political Department for conducting an enquiry into the allegations made against the ruler of Patiala.

In the course of another resolution the AISPC clarified its attitude towards the newly formed Indian States People's Republican League which had been set up just when the third session of the Conference was going to be held. The AISPC, while agreeing with the objects of the League, considered its emergence as dangerous for the future growth of the Conference. It was also suspected that the League had attracted some disgruntled elements who had been opposed to the policy of the Conference and had now joined the other party at the instance of the princes in order to create a rift in the ranks of the states people.

#### Fourth Session

The 4th session of the AISPC, which was also held in Bombay, was presided over by N. C. Kelkar and attended by prominent public men from the states and British India, including, among others, Prof. Abhyankar, A. V. Thakkar, Dr. Mohd. Alam, A. V. Patvardhan and Abdul Rehman Cassam Mitha. Jamna Das Mehta was the Chairman of the Reception Committee.

In his presidential address, Kelkar deplored the apathy of Muslim state subjects towards the struggle for freedom. He said it would be unfortunate if a situation similar to that which characterised the Indian National Congress were created in regard to AISPC also. The princes and the state governments were only too eager to play one section of the community against the other. It was, he said, for the Muslim community to see as to where its real interests lay.

Jamna Das Mehta denounced in his address the practice of the Political Department and the ruling princes appointing Europeans as Ministers in states. It was a dangerous practice, particularly because in the proposed federal legislature, some of these Ministers might be nominated as representatives of the Indian states.

The Conference adopted two resolutions on the second day. According to one of them a committee was appointed to enquire into the affairs of the Patiala state. The second resolution named certain office-bearers of the Conference for giving effect to its resolutions. Prof. Abhyankar was appointed as president, Balwantray Mehta and Amritlal Sheth as Joint Secretaries, Mani Shankar Trivedi as General Secretary, Durlabchand Umedchand as Treasurer and Chitranjan Sharan Ajit as Provisional Secretary of the All-India States People's Conference.

Once again the question of states people's representation at the Round Table Conference cropped up and the Conference registered its emphatic protest against the deliberate exclusion of the states people from the constitution-making machinery, the Round Table Conference, the Consultative Committee and the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee. It meant that over 80 million people of India were not consulted at all at the time of constitution-making. This was an act of sheer injustice and a negation of democracy, specially because the people of the states were

expected to pay taxes to the federal purse and federal laws were to be made applicable to them. Denial of representation to such a large number of people, therefore, went against the fundamental principle of 'no taxation without representation'.

On the same issue of non-representation of states people, the Conference condemned the federation scheme as embodied in the White Paper. It urged that the states people were entitled to fundamental rights, such as the right to possess personal property, freedom of worship, speech, opinion and association and the right to be tried by a properly constituted judiciary. The Conference also claimed that every state subject should have the right to sue in a court of law any prince who infringed the laws of the federation. They wanted that the Federal Court should have within its jurisdiction the Indian states as well and that it should have the power of an appellate court for them just as it had for the people of British India.

In another resolution the Conference condemned the Government of India's policy of retrocession of the Cantonment limits to the states. It further urged that in the case of Cantonments which had already been transferred to states, adequate safeguards should be provided for the liberty of the person and property of state subjects. Then came up for discussion the chronic subject of lawlessness and arbitrary taxation in the states. Many cases of extravagance on the part of the princes, imposition of unbearable and unfair taxes, police excesses, acts of oppression and violence, promulgation of ordinances at will and general mal-administration and misrule were cited and a resolution adopted condemning these acts. The Conference protested against the incarceration of 8 public workers of Bikaner on a false charge of conspiracy when they were enlisting members for the AISPC and obtaining signatures

on a memorandum containing the states people's demands. The Conference urged the Maharaja of Bikaner to release these prisoners unconditionally and to repeal the Public Safety Act.

The Conference appealed to the Paramount Power to review all such cases with the help of independent tribunals so that the victims of prosecution could get justice.

It is very significant that this session of the Conference adopted a resolution which may be said to be complimentary to the rulers. The resolution demanded that as the people were the final judges of the virtues or vices of the ruling princes and their governments, no prince should be suspended or removed from his Gaddi for alleged misrule unless there was a clearly expressed demand from his subjects or the All-India States People's Conference to that effect. The Conference opined that in such cases where the ruler was removed, a committee fully representative of the state subjects should be appointed for carrying on the state administration during the period of the enquiry instead of entrusting the administration to a civilian nominated by the Paramount Power.

The Conference noted with distress the tendency on the part of certain princes to float commercial and industrial concerns in their own name or to grant monopolies therefor to certain individuals for their own benefit. The maritime states of Kathiawad were the worst culprits of such monopolistic activities. The Conference urged immediate abolition and stoppage of such undesirable trading policies and granting of monopolies and licences.

In order that the national solidarity of India may be maintained unimpaired, the Conference urged that no Indian state should be given the option of joining or not joining the All-India federation. It pleaded that it should be made

obligatory for all states to federate either singly or in groups. The Conference also expressed itself against the granting of weightage to Indian states in the future federal legislature and demanded that as a matter of principle representation should be given to the state subjects in proportion to their population. It also opined that no state should be allowed to federate unless it had introduced or agreed to introduce responsible government within its territories simultaneously with its entry into the federation.

The Conference pointed out that certain princes were establishing ineffective legislative bodies which were neither representative in character nor free to enact laws. Such legislatures were intended only to camouflage the real designs of the rulers. It called upon the Government of India to see that all the Indian states implemented the four reforms suggested by Lord Irwin during his Viceroyalty, namely, the establishment of effective representative legislatures, inauguration of independent High Courts, giving permanency to state services and fixing of privy purses. It reminded the Paramount Power that it owed an obligation to the states people to protect them against the misrule of autocratic princes, and it insisted that this obligation could not be transferred to any other agency without the consent of the states people who had a right to be consulted about at least their own welfare.

Considering the question of the all India federation, the Conference supported the federal idea in principle, but it demanded that federal citizenship on the basis of equality of privilege should be recognised in respect of all citizens of India whether living in the states or the provinces. It also reiterated the view expressed in earlier sessions that there could be no real union between the democratically governed British Indian provinces and the autocratically governed Indian states, and, therefore,

stressed that the process of democratisation of the latter should be expedited in order to bring them on par with the provinces. The Conference opposed the view of vesting the supervisory powers over the states in the Viceroy dissociated from the Government of India, as proposed in the White Paper. The Conference stood for vesting Paramountcy in the federal government.

For all these reasons the Conference felt that unless it was suitably modified the federal scheme as embodied in the White Paper was inimical to the interests of British India as much as to those of the states people.



## The Federal Idea : Princes' Reaction

Introduction of Dyarchy in the provinces as a result of the implementation of the Montague Chelmsford reform brought in two new elements in the governance of India by the British. Firstly, it sowed the seeds of devolution of authority as between the Centre and the provinces. Secondly, it conceded, in principle if not in actual practice, an element of responsible government in the provinces by reserving certain departments to be headed by elected members of the provincial legislatures. In the Centre the Viceroy's Executive Council was reconstituted and nearly half the portfolios were set aside for Indians to be nominated by the Viceroy.

These changes, however, affected only British India, leaving the states outside the orbit of the new reforms. Though the reforms were the target of criticism by nearly all the political parties in India, Mr Montague's claim that the reforms would lead to "gradual development of self-governing institutions" was generally welcomed. To this extent the princes had naturally started displaying concern about their future, for it was plain that the states would not remain unaffected by the working of the proposed measures in the provinces.

Working of the reforms in full view of the adjoining states all over India, holding of the elections on a wider franchise for the legislatures, the appointment of Ministers responsible to legislative councils for the administration of transferred subjects and the interpellative, deliberative and law-making activities of the latter bodies were not likely to pass unnoticed, or perhaps even unenvied, by the subjects of the Indian states. Speculation as to the possibility of the birth of a similar diarchic system in the states where the 'Raj' might continue to direct some things autocratically as before but other things might be administered by representatives of assemblies of the people, could not be kept out of the minds of state subjects. Moreover, in some states this speculation was followed by the establishment by the rulers of legislative assemblies of sorts, though with consultative rather than real parliamentary attributes.

The far-reaching changes that were taking place in the provinces provided food for thought to the princes about the future. The Montague-Chelmsford Report itself had left little in doubt. In the concluding chapter of the Report it had been stated :

"Our conception of the eventual future of India is a sisterhood of states self-governing in all matters of purely local or provincial interest...Over this congeries of states would preside a Central Government increasingly representative of and responsible to the people of all of them : dealing with matters both internal and external of common interest to the whole of India : acting as an arbiter in inter-State relations and representing the interests of all India on equal terms with the self-governing units of the British Empire. In this picture there is a place also for the Native States."\*

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\* Montague-Chelmsford Report,

To balance these developments, as it were, a promise was held out to the princely order at the time of the inauguration of the Chamber of Princes that the princes might rest assured that the assurances given to them by the Crown on many occasions to maintain unimpaired the privileges, rights and dignities of the princes of India would always be honoured. The Duke of Connaught, who inaugurated the Chamber of Princes declared that the Royal pledges would always remain "inviolable and inviolable."

However, the princes were still dissatisfied and apprehensive. They were anxious to know whether if British India achieved Dominion Status the British Parliament would or would not hand over to it the conduct of relations with the states, and whether it would safeguard their internal sovereignty for ever under any new form of constitution that might be devised for British India or for India as a whole.

Secondly, the princes desired to have a clearer and more precise definition of Paramount Power for another reason too. They alleged intervention in their internal affairs by the Political Department in contravention of the terms of the treaties. They could not call the offender to account as Paramountcy had never been precisely defined. The demand of the princes, thus, was that the functions and powers of Paramountcy should be clearly laid down so that rulers of the states might know clearly as to where they stood and what the limits of their own internal sovereignty were.

Thirdly, the princes desired that an enquiry should be held into the financial and economic relation of British India and the states so that the states may be able to claim relief from fiscal burdens which they thought to be inequitable. Such an enquiry the princes regarded as an essential prelude to any schemes whether for federal coalition or for

organised consultation between the states and British India in matters of common concern.

The new forum provided to them, namely, the Chamber of Princes, was fully utilised by the princes for ventilating their views. During the first five years of its existence, these grievances and demands of the rulers found expression in every session. It certainly helped the growth of the Chamber, though some might have thought it would be put to better use.

Whatever the nature or character of the Chamber of Princes, it represented an improvement in certain important aspects over the existing situation. The composition of the Chamber pulled the princely order out of the welter of confusion by introducing a rational classification among the states. One hundred and eight princes were made members of the Chamber in their own right and 12 princes were to be elected by rulers of 127 other states. The remaining states and statelets numbering no less than 365 were rejected as inconsequential and, therefore, unworthy of representation.

Again, for the first time, Indian states were encouraged to hold joint consultations on matters of common interest. They were now invited to meet in the Chamber, to hold consultations and exchange views freely on matters like "their relationship to the Crown, political practice and weighty questions regarding points of contact with British India." As de Montmorency says :

"The work of the Chamber, and particularly that of the Standing Committee of the Chamber, cut away masses of dead undergrowth from the wood and enabled the issues calling for decision to emerge into the clear light of day."\*

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\* "The Indian States and the Indian Federation" P. 92.

The imperialist policy of the British Government and consideration of self interest, however, deprived the Chamber of Princes of any real opportunities to develop healthy conventions or to devise means of bringing the administration of the states into line with those of the provinces. The blow was struck at the very start when it was laid down that whatever the Chamber might recommend, it was not binding on any individual state or ruler and that the Chamber did not affect, in any way, the right or freedom of action of any state to address the Government of India in regard to any matter. It was thus reduced to a body whose only privilege was to meet, talk and disperse. Some of the biggest and most important states like Hyderabad and Mysore never joined it. In its annual sessions most of the time was devoted to discussions of personal privileges and prerogatives. Matters of administrative and political import affecting rights and welfare of the state's people were seldom discussed in it. Its meetings were marked by unbridled display of splendour, superficial glory and empty claims of equating themselves with their states.

In the minds of the princes the issue of Paramount Power and their relationship with it took precedence over all other issues affecting the well being of their subjects. The Government of India, far from looking askance towards this trend, often sought to encourage it. There is little wonder if the Chamber of Princes had no achievement of any kind to its credit.

Of the three recommendations made in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, namely settlement of disputes between States or between a State and a Provincial Government or the Government of India by a commission of enquiry, placing the States in direct relationship with the Government of India and, lastly bringing the States and the British India closer through joint deliberations, the last one could never

be implemented just because no attempt was made to have joint deliberations of the Chamber of Princes and the Council of States. As Menon says, the gradual bringing together of the States and the British India remained a pious hope. The Paramount Power continued to be paramount and the paramountcy remained vague and indefinite as ever.\*

Whatever might have been the intentions of Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford or for that matter of the British Government while instituting the Chamber of Princes, this august body throughout remained purely deliberative without any executive or legislative functions. The hopes that were entertained at the time of the inauguration of the Chamber and subsequently by successive Viceroys and the Simon Commission that it might somehow bring the States and the Upper House of the Central Legislature closer never materialised. To say that the Chamber of Princes was never meant to fulfil any such functions would be contrary to the facts of the case. Even the Butler Committee which emphasised the necessity for common action on matters which equally affected both the British India and the states, envisaged some kind of common deliberations between representatives of the two Indias at the instance of or with the help of the Chamber of Princes. As for Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford, that the conception of all-India polity was already present in their minds is more than evident from the following paragraph in their Report :—

"Granted the announcement of August 20, 1917, we cannot at the present time envisage its complete fulfilment in any form other than that of a congeries of self-governing Indian Provinces associated for certain purposes under a responsible Government of

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\* The Story of the Integration of the Indian States, page 10.

India, with the possibility of what are now the Native States of India being finally embodied in the same whole in some relation which we will not now attempt to define. For such an organisation the English language has no word but 'Federal.\*'

How the Princes reacted to the federal idea in the Round Table Conference, at the meetings of the Joint Parliamentary Committee and later on when drafts of the Instruments of Accession were put up to them for their acceptance by the Viceroy, is a story told in one of the subsequent chapters. It is sufficient to note here that though some of them were carried away by emotion and superficial patriotic fervour now and then, the princes never actually reconciled themselves with forming a part of the Indian Federation on terms which could be described as just or equitable for the people of the states on the one hand and India as a whole on the other.

Reference has been made to the Montague Chelmsford Reforms and the preceding and succeeding announcements which went beyond British India in their scope when defining the ultimate outcome of constitutional reforms in India. What was vague at that time began to appear clearer as the constitutional reforms were implemented over the years. In this constitutional development there are certain clear and well defined stages which called for specific commitments in the form of official statements by representatives of the British Government, the princes and the Indian people. For example, the events leading to the appointment of the Simon Commission provided one such occasion for official announcements from the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India, reiterating the formation of an all-India federation as the essential and inevitable outcome of these reforms. In

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\* Montague Chelmsford Report as quoted in Indian Administration by G. N. Joshi Page 30

all such announcements reference was invariably made, though in guarded language, to the participation of the states in the proposed federation in accordance with some mutually acceptable arrangement.

By way of welcoming this development, Indian public leaders reiterated the national demand that ultimately British India and the Indian states would have to form parts of one administration. The Nehru Committee too had emphasised in clear terms that the states could not possibly be left out of the scope of an all-India federation as they formed an integral part of India. Though the Committee assured the princes that they would continue to enjoy their rights and privileges, it made it clear that such an arrangement would necessitate "a modification of the system of government and administration prevailing within their territories."

The reaction of the princes to the very hint that they might some day be shaken out of their placid exclusiveness gave them a feeling of uneasiness. Their present position conferred on them security and personal freedom to the saturation point. They were sensible enough to see that any change in that position would necessarily mean compromising with at least some of their rights and privileges. The very talk of all-India federation therefore gave them a feeling of trepidation. Sir John Simon, Chairman of the Constitution Enquiry Commission and the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, had also been hinting towards such a development. Sir John's suggestion that a Round Table Conference be held for consultations among representatives of British India and the Indian states for a full solution of the Indian problem as a whole, had also been accepted by the British Government. The Viceroy had made an official announcement saying that "the natural issue of India's constitutional progress is the attainment of Dominion Status." Such a development



would naturally mean transfer of greater power into Indian hands. This, in turn, would bring British India face to face with Indian India. If in British India all power was exercised by people's representatives in democratically governed provinces, how long could the princes hope to stem the tide of popular agitation in the states against their autocratic rule?

It is not surprising that the princes should have got scared of any talk about constitutional reforms as all current suggestions seemed to be inexorably leading to some kind of *federal union involving the Indian states*. They were not, however, openly hostile to the federal idea. The general attitude of the states to this idea had never been defined by the Chamber of Princes. Only the Maharaja of Bikaner had declared on behalf of the states' delegation to the first Round Table Conference that the rulers of Indian states were prepared to join in an all India federation scheme provided due respect was paid to the rights and privileges of the states and their rulers. He held out an assurance on behalf of himself and the princely order that "they were agreed that India must be united on a federal basis and, provided their rights and privileges were safeguarded, the princes would come out willingly to join the federation". In a patriotic vein he identified the states rulers with "that passion for an equal status in the eyes of the world expressed in the desire for Dominion Status which is the dominant force amongst all thinking Indians today".\* The Nawab of Bhopal not only endorsed what the Bikaner Maharaja had said but went further to add "We can only federate with a self governing and federal British India".

There came about later a change in the attitude of the *princes' representatives*, which was not a little surprising in the context of their past utterances. For years it remained a

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\* The Story of the Integration of Indian States P. 28

matter of speculation as to why the princes, or at least the rulers of bigger States, had suddenly decided to enter the federation. Some thought that they had been prevailed upon by British statesmen who could not resist the grant of some responsibility at the centre. Menon's explanation, however, for this change in the attitude of the princes appears to be most convincing. Says he :

"There were several reasons which prompted this response from the rulers. Few States were entirely untouched by the mass awakening in British India. In some of them, disturbances had taken place and authority had been challenged. Few of the rulers had any illusion as to what would happen if a campaign of civil disobedience were launched in their States. Moreover, the rulers were convinced that it would be more difficult to drive a good bargain if they waited till they were faced with a united and self-governing British India. Some of the leading rulers who controlled the Chamber of Princes were actually under the impression that their States would derive financial benefits by joining the federation. A few were actuated by personal ambition and looked forward to exercising a great influence in the administration and possibly to holding high offices in the new government. That a Labour Government was in power was also an important factor in determining their attitude."\*

No doubt a majority of the princes shared these sentiments at that time. But there were exceptions. A number of rulers, headed by the Maharaja of Patiala, reacted unfavourably to the federal idea. In fact they hardly made a secret of their opposition to it. This group considered a confederation of the states as an essential step before

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\* Ibid, Page 28.

joining an all India federation. Though this move was able to enlist the support of several smaller states, the idea of setting up a union of "Indian India" never got any response from accredited spokesmen of the princes.

However, as details of the requirements of federation began to be discussed and the idea promised to take shape, the attitude of the princes began to harden at every step. Firstly, their demand for the preservation of their rights and privileges was so nebulous that all concessions offered by Indian political parties, including the Congress, were rejected by them as falling short of their expectations. Secondly, there was general reluctance on their part to submit to any direct taxation for federal purposes or to relinquish any special right or privilege without full compensation. Thirdly, their inveterate suspicion of an Indian Government at the Centre and their exclusive reliance on the British for maintaining their privileges had created for the princes a special vested interest in the status quo in India.

What was overt and implied in the attitude of the princes came to surface as open hostility as soon as the Congress advanced the contention that the representatives of the states in the federal legislature must be elected by the states subjects and not nominated by the Governments of the states or their rulers.

The first Round Table Conference achieved nothing much beyond setting up a federal structure sub-committee. Its only achievement was that a general agreement was reached on an all-India federation being the ultimate goal of the negotiations. One of the reasons why the first session of the RTC could not make much headway beyond defining its scope was that the Congress Party had boycotted the Conference and had sent no representative to it.

The situation in the country, however, changed within weeks of the break-up of the first RTC. As a result of Lord Irwin's conciliatory policy leading to the release of all Congress leaders from prison, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed in March, 1931. The Congress had now agreed to participate in the next RTC and it sent Mahatma Gandhi as its sole representative. The second RTC soon came to brass-tacks and started discussing the composition of the federal legislature. The states' representatives were found thinking entirely in terms of personal gains. Bigger states demanded representation in proportion to their importance and population. Their rulers wanted to have special financial advantages by joining the federation. Mysore for example, agreed to join the federation only if relieved of its tribute. Hyderabad's joining it was conditional on the Nizam's wishes being satisfied in regard to Berar. Baroda demanded satisfaction on the issue of port Okha and salt questions before business could be done. The rulers gradually started turning their backs on the federation and the outlook at the conclusion of the second Round Table Conference was far from roseate.

Important questions relating to the federal legislature, its size and composition, were still unsettled when the third Round Table Conference met. The Congress once again kept out of it.

The manner of the representation of the states continued to pose a problem for the Viceroy and the British Government. Sometimes allocation of seats was thought to be done on the population basis and sometimes according to their political status and the number of salutes which the rulers enjoyed. All efforts by the Viceroy and his emissaries at soft-peddalling the issue elicited from the rulers only one query : "What about our rights and privileges?" Strangely enough, the rulers demanded "that the constitu-

tion should respect their treaty right, that there should be no interference in their internal affairs, and that a provision should be made for the states joining the federation collectively through the confederation' \*

Eventually, His Majesty's Government had to arrive at its own conclusions and formulate its own proposals which were published in a White Paper. A Joint Select Committee of both the Houses of Parliament was appointed to examine these proposals. The states' representatives and all political parties, except the Congress, participated in subsequent discussions. With the submission of the report of the Joint Select Committee in October, 1934 the Government of India Bill was introduced in Parliament in December the same year. The princes set up a representative committee of states Ministers to examine the provisions of the Bill. This committee suggested several amendments and alterations and said that unless these were effected they would not be able to recommend to their rulers that they should join the proposed federation. Rulers and their representatives met again in a conference a few months later. This conference adopted a resolution which said "The Bill and the Instrument of Accession cannot be regarded as acceptable to the Indian States."

After protracted discussions and debates in the Commons and the House of Lords, the Government of India Bill was adopted by Parliament after eight weeks the discordant note struck by the princes notwithstanding. After receiving the Royal assent in August, it became Government of India Act, 1935.

We need not go into details as to the provisions of the Government of India Act. Suffice it to say that it provided for a constitutional relationship between the states

\* Ibid P. 32

and British India on a federal basis. One of the special features of the Act was that whereas in the case of the states acceptance of the federal scheme was voluntary, it was obligatory in the case of the provinces. The states' accession was to be effected by an Instrument of Accession the terms of which made it clear that the Act asserted no authority over the states save such as flowed from the rulers' freely executed instrument. Various arguments had been adduced in support of this differential treatment as between the provinces and the states. Historically and politically, it is easy enough to understand how differently these two sets of territories stood in 1935, but it would be difficult for a student of political science to appreciate the differential treatment accorded to them in the constitutional scheme. The Joint Select Committee sought to explain this apparent anomaly thus :

"The main difficulties are two : that the Indian States are wholly different in status and character from the provinces of British India, and that they are not prepared to federate on the same terms as it is proposed to apply to the provinces. On the first point, the Indian states, unlike the British Indian provinces, possess sovereignty in various degrees and they are, broadly speaking, under a system of personal government. Their accession to a federation cannot therefore take place otherwise than by the voluntary act of the Ruler of each state, and after accession the representatives of the acceding state in the Federal Legislature will be nominated by the Ruler and its subjects will continue to owe allegiance to him. On the second point, the Rulers have made it clear that while they are willing to consider Federation now with the provinces of British India on certain terms, they could not, as sovereign States, agree to the

exercise by a Federal Government in relation to them on a range of powers identical in all respects with those which that Government will exercise in relation to the provinces on whom autonomy has yet to be conferred "

From the promulgation of the Government of India Act, 1935, in 1936 right up to September, 1939, when the outbreak of the war in Europe changed the whole situation, the primary occupation of the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, was to persuade the princes to join the federation. There is no method which he did not employ in order to bring home to the states rulers the advantages of deciding in favour of joining the federation. But all his efforts proved of no avail for the simple reason that the rulers were dead set against any change in the secure and privileged position which they had enjoyed for ever 100 years. The question of India's political advance did not interest them the least bit, though now and then they had given vent to patriotic sentiments at the time of state banquets.

The first step which the Viceroy took for achieving his mission was to send out three trusted emissaries, equipped with draft copies of the Instrument of Accession to the states. For a year these emissaries, Sir Courtenay Latimer, Sir Francis Wylie and Sir Arthur Lothian, toured the various states, meeting rulers and their advisers. Their advice and friendly counsel cut no ice with the rulers who, in Menon's words, made it clear that in their case, the urge to unity was not dominant nor were they the supplicants asking to come in. The question that agitated them was not whether federation would enable them to contribute to the benefit of India as a whole, but whether their own position would be better and safer inside the federation than outside it.

On their return from tours the emissaries reported to the Viceroy the failure of their mission. They said the princes wanted far-reaching changes and concessions in the constitution before agreeing to join the federation. In plain language they were out to have the best bargain and that it would not be possible to induce them to join the federation without adequate "horse-trading". The Viceroy, keen as he was to bring the princes in the federation suggested to the Secretary of State that some more explicit guarantee be extended to the rulers and that status quo may be maintained in regard to such fiscal items as the princes insisted on maintaining. Lord Linlithgow suggested that the Government of India Act may be amended accordingly. The Secretary of State, however, did not agree with the Viceroy. He thought that "such concessions were incompatible with the general scheme of federation and would arouse a most damaging controversy both in Britain and in India."

Amendment of the Act having thus been ruled out, the Political Department now set about the impossible task of meeting the demands of the princes within the four corners of the Act. Again, a round of discussions and negotiations started, but all these came to naught. The truth is that the officers of the Political Department gave to the negotiations a slant of their own different from the stand-point of the Viceroy. Interpreting the keenness of the Viceroy as an opportunity for the princes, these officers almost encouraged them to stick to their guns. To quote Menon again, "instead of putting a break on the never-ceasing demands of the rulers and stressing the advantages to be gained by their entering the federation, the Political Department seemed to spend its time more in emphasising the loss the rulers would suffer if they were to federate and in instituting a search for expedients wherewith to make good or mitigate that loss. The result was a tendency to



give in to the rulers all along the line \*\*

To get over the monotony of infructuous talks and negotiations, the rulers met in a conference in Bombay in November, 1938. For hours they talked and heard their Ministers and advisers. The resolution which they ultimately adopted rejected the constitutional scheme on the plea that by accepting it "the rulers and their successors would find themselves unable in the fast changing circumstances of the country, to duly discharge their duties to the Crown, to their dynasties and to their people."

Meanwhile Lord Linlithgow's patience was also running out. He must have felt disgusted with this game of hide and seek. In his anxiety to finalise things and to know exactly where everyone concerned stood, he addressed a circular letter to all the rulers of salute states. In his letter, he enclosed the revised drafts of the Instruments of Accession and the draft acceptance of His Majesty. It was plainly stated in the letter that there was no prospect of any substantial change in the terms of the Instrument of Accession and that the rulers should inform the Viceroy within six months whether they would be prepared to accept it as it was worded.

Not a single prince replied to this letter. On the other hand, they met in another conference to discuss the matter. The conference once again pleaded rulers' inability to sign the Instrument of Accession, but they worded their refusal in guarded and diplomatic language. This is the resolution which they adopted :

"The Conference of Princes and Ministers assembled at Bombay, having considered the revised draft of the Instrument of Accession and connected papers, resolves that the terms on the basis of which accession is offered are fundamentally unsatisfactory

in the direction indicated in the report of the Hydari Committee of Ministers and confirmed by the recommendations of the Gwalior Conference, and are, therefore, unacceptable. At the same time, the Conference records its belief that it could not be the intention of His Majesty's Government to close the door on all-India federation."

Whatever the reply the princes might have got from the Viceroy or the Political Department regarding their latest resolution, the door to the federation was now virtually closed, so far as the states were concerned. From all accounts, it appeared that the princes' attitude made the Viceroy unhappy, but there was hardly anything left for him to do. He was getting further worried over the situation as it was developing in various states bordering on the autonomous provinces where the Congress had captured power. The All-India States People's Conference and its various branches, encouraged by the newly acquired prestige and power of their sister organisation, the Congress, in eight provinces, felt bolder than ever before to agitate for responsible government in the states. Trouble was simmering in Rajasthan, in the Deccan States and in far off Kashmir and Travancore and there were open conflicts in Mysore and Rajkot.

It must be said that Lord Linlithgow maintained throughout a balanced attitude towards these obligations. He must have thought that the attitude of the princes which had throughout been one-sided had now come home to roost. Though the Viceroy could not have possibly supported the demand for responsible government in the states and endorsed the stand of the Congress, he certainly reflected in his attitude the spirit of the constitutional change that had swept the country. How long he could have kept the poise without falling foul of the princes in India and the British

Government at home if the war had not come to his rescue, it is difficult to guess. The fact is that when the war broke out, Lord Linlithgow heaved a sigh of relief, for it automatically pulled him out of a position which was every day getting more and more tenuous and untenable. Only a week after the declaration of the war, the Viceroy announced in his address to both Houses of the Central Legislature that while federation remained the objective of His Majesty's Government, "the compulsion of the present international situation and the fact that, given the necessity for concentrating on the emergency that confronts us, we have no choice but to hold in suspense the work in connection with the preparations for federation."

This relieved the Viceroy of the difficult task of having to persuade the states to fall into line with his wishes and the provisions of the Government of India Act relating to the federation.

The outbreak of the war in Europe changed the entire constitutional outlook in India. Helping the war effort became, for the official world, the supreme need of the hour, superseding all other requirements. As long as the war lasted all constitutional questions, including that of the states, had to be put in cold storage.

The next occasion for discussing the constitutional future of India was provided by the arrival in India of the Cripps Mission in 1942. The Cripps plan purported, as a short-term measure, to get British Indian party leaders to agree to share the responsibilities of the Central Government in which the states were not required to participate.

Having rightly conjectured that the reaction of the Congress and the Muslim League to the Cripps offer was unfavourable, the princes felt happy in their hearts. They were saved the unpleasant task of having to torpedo the proposals themselves. Their delegation, however, met Sir

Stafford Cripps and after a brief talk, handed him over the following resolution.

"The Indian states will be glad, as always, in the interest of their motherland, to make their contribution in every reasonable manner compatible with the sovereignty and integrity of the states towards the framing of a constitution for India. The states should be assured, however, that in the event of a number of states not finding it feasible to adhere, the non-adhering states or groups of states, so desiring, would have the right to form a union of their own, with full sovereign status in accordance with a suitable and agreed procedure devised for the purpose."

When the failure of the Cripps mission was announced and Cripps himself left India, the princes heaved a sigh of relief. Indeed the Prime Minister of a major state is reported to have written to the Viceroy's Political Adviser, Sir Henry Craik : "I see a lot of expressions of deep sorrow in the press on the failure of the mission which has been described as a great tragedy. Personally I feel that we escaped one very narrowly."\*

As the plan was full of snags and was considered as imperiling the future of India, it was given a short shrift by the Congress. The princes and their governments never had a chance of venting their views on it, beyond stating their own terms & conditions mixed with the usual platitudes. Following the Cripps Mission precedent, the states were not invited by Lord Wavell to the Simla Conference of 1945. This Conference too met the same fate as the Cripps plan.

With the cessation of hostilities in Europe and the Labour Party coming into power in England, the search for a solution of India's constitutional and political problem began afresh. Reference has already been made to the visits of

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\* Ibid, Page 51.

the British Parliamentary Delegation and the Cabinet Mission. Following the line of earlier official statements, the Cabinet Mission assured the princes that there was no intention on the part of the Crown to initiate any change in their status. The Mission, however, expected that the consent of the princes to any change which might emerge as a result of negotiations would not be reasonably withheld. The Cabinet Mission announced its plan on May 16, 1946 laying down an elaborate procedure for the proposed Union of India. It did not deal with the states in detail and provided for their entry in the following manner:

- a) Paramountcy could neither be retained by the British Crown nor transferred to the new Government. But according to the assurance given by the rulers that they were ready and willing to do so, the states were expected to co-operate in the new development of India.
- b) The precise form which the co-operation of the states would take must be a matter of negotiation during the building up of the new constitutional structure, and it by no means followed that it would be identical for all the states.
- c) The states were to retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded to the Union, namely, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications.
- d) In the preliminary stage the states were to be represented on the Constituent Assembly by a Negotiating Committee.
- e) In the final Constituent Assembly they were to have appropriate representation, *not exceeding* 93 seats, the method of selection was to be determined by consultation.
- f) After the Provincial and Group Constitutions had been drawn up by the three sections of the

Constituent Assembly, the representatives of the Sections and the Indian States would reassemble for the purpose of settling the Union Constitution.

The reaction of the Congress to the Cabinet Mission's plan so far as the entry of the states was concerned was quite critical. In a resolution the Congress Working Committee expressed the view that the Constituent Assembly could not be formed by entirely disparate elements and the manner of selecting states' representatives for it must approximate in so far as was possible to the method adopted in the Provinces".\* The Press statement issued on behalf of the Cabinet Mission, however, a day later reaffirmed that "the question of how the states representatives should be appointed to the Constituent Assembly was not a matter for decision by the Cabinet Mission and was clearly one which must be discussed with the states".

The first reaction of the states rulers to the Cabinet Mission's Plan was not unfavourable. The Standing Committee of the Chamber of Princes in a statement (June 10, 1946) described the Plan as "a fair basis for negotiations". Simultaneously it set up a representative committee to negotiate the states entry into the Constituent Assembly. For carrying on these negotiations, the Constituent Assembly also sub-sequently appointed a committee to confer with the Negotiation Committee of the Chamber of Princes

So far so good ; the states had agreed to negotiate for entry into the Constituent Assembly. How the process of negotiations was carried and how at every step the rulers either changed their minds or were plagued by second thoughts forms the subject-matter of another chapter—"Freedom Eve".

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\*Proceedings of the Congress Working Committee held on May 24, 1946

Here we close the narration with the end of 1946. But before we do so, let us also see the reaction of the states people to the Cabinet Mission's Plan. Their principal organisation, the AISPC called an emergent meeting of its Executive to consider the Plan. The meeting, which was attended by over 200 representatives from various states was presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru. Though there were lengthy discussions alternating between optimism and pessimism, it was Nehru's address which correctly expressed their views and reflected their inner feelings. As the states people felt bitter over the provision that states representatives to Constituent Assembly in most cases would be nominees of the rulers, Nehru touched upon this subject in his address. With his inimitable emphasis, he declared "The states people claim to represent for themselves and they will see to it that they are heard. None else, and certainly not their rulers, can speak for them"\*

This was followed by a spurt of activity in all the states. The network of Praja Mandals and Lok Parishads had already got completely identified with the Congress. So, taking instructors from top Congress leaders, the states people began to prepare themselves for the impending, perhaps, the last they thought, struggle for the assertion of people's rights to participate in the making of India's constitution. From Travancore and Mysore in the South to Jodhpur and Bikaner in the north-west, political organisation got busy rallying public opinion in support of their demand to elect their representatives for the Constituent Assembly.

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\*Urmila Phadnis, 'Towards the Integration of Indian States', p. 153,

## Movement Gathers Momentum

Let us now pick up the threads and see how the states people's movement grew from strength to strength in the crucial years before and after the war.

The fifth session of the AISPC, held at Karachi in 1936, proved to be a landmark in the history of the states people's struggle for freedom in more ways than one. It was presided over by Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya and was attended, among others, by the Congress President, Jawaharlal Nehru and an ex-Congress President, Rajendra Prasad. Although the freedom movements in states and in British India were in a way inter-linked and closely related to each other, yet on surface the relationship between the two movements always left something to be clarified. After Gandhiji's clear-cut writings and elucidations, the speeches made at the Karachi session by Dr. Sitaramayya, Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajendra Prasad furnished the best clue to the Congress attitude to the struggle waged by the States people for civil liberties and self-Government. Dr. Pattabhi's interest in the movement had been of long standing and his connection with the AISPC proved to be a boon to the Conference in the long run,



The Conference was inaugurated by Jawaharlal Nehru. In his address, he threw ample light on the Congress policy towards the Indian States. He expressed his desire to remove certain misunderstandings that existed between the States people and the Congress. Emphasising the unity and indivisibility of India, he said that the fight of the Congress for Indian independence also included the liberation of states subjects, but, he added in parenthesis, only on India emerging independent. If the Congress attained Swaraj, the states people would inevitably share their liberation. One thing, he said, to be understood clearly was that it was the British Government and not the Indian princes who had to be fought for attaining freedom and responsible government in the states. As the Congress was busy fighting the British Government, once its fight bore fruit and the British power tumbled, the princes would not be able to resist the demand of the states people.

Another suggestion Jawaharlal made to the states people was that following the Congress example they should establish contact with the people and rouse mass consciousness instead of depending merely on sending memorials and petitions. He made it plain that the political problem of India could be settled only by a Constituent Assembly. Such an Assembly could be formed only when the British Government was gone or was on the verge of going. There could be no doubt that at that time the Congress would include representatives of the states people in the Constituent Assembly.

As one reads these words today in the light of actual happenings since 1947, one would concede that what Jawaharlal said at Karachi in 1936 was marked by prophetic vision.

In his address Rajendra Prasad also generally endorsed the views of Jawaharlal and assured the states people of

Congress sympathy with their cause. He advised the people of the states to have full faith in Congress leadership. Following its programme of work, the AISPC should organise constructive work in the states so as to enlist for their movement the support of Kisans and the common people.

In his presidential address, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya said that during the one decade that had passed since the states people had inaugurated their movement and founded the all-India States People's Conference, they had held four regular sessions and one special session, which was ample proof of their earnestness and general enthusiasm. He realised that conducting a freedom movement in Indian states was far more difficult and arduous than in British India.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Dr. Sitaramayya's address was the remarks he made about the relationship between the States people and the Indian National Congress. The views he expressed were, in some respects, in sharp contrast with what Nehru and Rajendra Prasad had said on the subject. He said that the Congress was not justified in leaving the states people to their fate. He went to the length of confessing that the attitude of the Congress towards the states problem had not been as might be expected and that it needed a substantial change. He thought that the states people were fully justified in asking the plain question : "Are you working for a federation or are you working for the Swaraj for British Indian provinces only ? If the former, do not assume an attitude of apathy or condescension towards the states people and their problems; if the latter, say so, and we wish you success and hope to receive strength ourselves therefrom. We welcome it, but part company now and here."

Replying to the question he had himself posed, Dr. Sitaramayya held that it could be taken for granted that the

former view was correct, that is to say, the Congress stood for a federation of the entire country. He advised the Congress not to take away with the right hand what it had given with the left. Having openly declared that it stood for the whole country, it had no alternative to lending full support to the freedom struggle in the Indian States. Nevertheless, the objectives of the Congress and the AISPC being the same, namely, full responsible government in their respective regions of influence, the states people could hope to free themselves from the incubus of autocratic princely rule by following the methods adopted by the Congress.

### Civil Liberties Union

Another landmark of the Karachi session of the AISPC was the formation of the Civil Liberties Union. Speaking on this resolution, the mover, Jai Narain Vyas said: "Those persons who live in the states or have connections with the state subjects would only know what sort of atrocities and repressions are perpetrated on the people there and how civil liberties are denied to them. We cannot ventilate our ideas in the states to the extent to which we can do it in British India. The stories of repression and wrongs committed there day after day would sound incredible like fairy tales, but they are actual facts."

Vyas went on to narrate how along with other political workers he was put down as a Badmash No. 10 in the Police register of Jodhpur State. Public meetings in the state were banned. Even cyclostyling, let alone publishing a periodical or a newspaper, was a crime in Jodhpur, and many other States. In Jaipur, he said, one could not start a school without the permission of state authorities and no teacher from outside could be employed. He said that even in bigger states like Mysore, Kashmir and Hyderabad, people were labouring under grave disabilities. Administration of

justice was whimsical and one-sided. He illustrated his point by referring to the arrest of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sant Ram and others in Nabha State and the ridiculous way in which they were tried. Seen in this light, Jai Narain Vyas thought, grant of civil liberties was the foremost and most immediate problem of the states people. It was for this purpose that the AISPC had decided to form a separate organisation called the Civil Liberties Union. This was one of the several resolutions adopted by the 5th session of the AISPC.

The resolution moved and adopted on the Government of India Act, 1935, condemned the proposed federal struction in which the states people had been denied representation and in the formation of which they were not consulted at any stage. Another important resolution referred to the problem of growing agrarian discontent which had culminated in the tragedies of Kashmir, Alwar, Sikar (Jaipur) and Loharu. The Conference suggested that following steps should be taken promptly by the state Governments to ease the situation which was steadily deteriorating :

1. Reduction in the rates of land revenue by one-third.
2. Application of equitable principles of taxation to the peasantry on the basis of the income-tax law of British India.
3. Scaling down and compounding of the load of rural indebtedness which was breaking the back of the pesantry.
4. Immediate enquiry into the conditions of the peasantry with a view to revising and modifying land revenues and land tenure system so as to bring them into line with modern conditions of life.

The Conference made a forceful appeal to all political organisations in British India to abandon their policy of

non interference in internal affairs of the states and to give all the active help they could to the states people in their unequal struggle for freedom. It noted that the Lucknow Congress resolution regarding the Indian States had made some advance towards compliance with the states people's demand, although the Conference thought that even this resolution was not altogether satisfactory or adequate. It requested the Indian National Congress to take a comprehensive and broad view of the problem of Indian emancipation, affecting equally as it did both the provinces and the states.

The Conference also adopted resolutions protesting against insufferable misrule in Sirohi where the state Darbar held the monopoly of trade, enacted rules which were detrimental to the interests of the people, encouraged the practice of forced religious conversions, gave undue preference to outsiders in state services, totally ignored the needs of public welfare such as health, education, agricultural reforms, etc and persisted in its repressive policy. The Conference condemned the highhandedness of the Thikanadar of Sikar (Jaipur) who tried to crush the legitimate movement of the cultivators whose agitation for reduction in taxes was sought to be crushed by the Thikanadar by force, resulting in several deaths by bullets. It also condemned the Jaipur Government which instead of redressing the grievances of the people supported the oppressor, the Thikanadar of Sikar.

The Governments of Loharu, Malerkotla, Patiala, Dharangdhra, Baroda, Dhar, Ratlam and Kapurthala were also criticised for their repressive agrarian policy. The cultivators, it was pointed out, suffered double tyranny and repression, for the state governments and feudal landlords vied with each other in perpetrating repression on the peasantry. The Patiala Government was condemned for

causing the death of a political worker, Seva Singh in Patiala Jail as a result of police excesses.

The most significant achievement of the session consisted in the success of its efforts to evolve a scientific and systematic organisational pattern for the Conference and its auxillary bodies. It adopted the constitution of the Conference and authorised the Working Committee to set the machinery provided under its provisions in motion as soon as possible.

The Working Committee of the Conference was empowered to frame all necessary rules to bring the Constitution into force and to meet all emergencies. For purposes of propagating its objectives the Conference set up the following organisational units.

(i) The Punjab States including Kashmir, Khairpur and Simla Hill States; (ii) Rajputana States; (iii) Central India States, including Rampur, Banaras and Tehri Garhwal; (iv) Gujarat States; (v) Kathiawad States; (vi) Southern Maratha States; (vii) South Indian States; (viii) Hyderabad and (ix) Orissa States, including Manipur and Cooch-Bihar.

It was at this session of the AISPC that the organisational pattern of the Conference was regulated and clearly defined. For winning over full and unreserved support of the Indian National Congress, this session did more than any previous or later session of the AISPC. The very presence of the Congress President and the holding of the session under the presidentship of a front-rank Congress leader like Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya did much to bring the Congress leadership closer to the states people's movement.

Another great achievement of the session was the establishment of Civil Liberties Union which focussed popular attention on the atrocities that were being committed on people living in Indian states and on the utter lack of civil liberties and civic rights in the princely territories.

### Navasari Convention

The workers of the All India States' People's Conference held a convention at Navasari in February 1938 for taking stock of the ever-changing situation and for considering a few pressing problems with which political workers in the Indian states were confronted. The foremost of these problems was, of course, the all-India federation looming on the political horizon of the country. Though the states' people had hardly left anything unsaid on the question, the uncertainties of the situation were such that they felt they could not reiterate their views too often.

The immediate cause of calling the Convention, however, was to give a fresh look to their problems arising from a resolution adopted by the Congress Working Committee at its Calcutta meeting. This Resolution while expressing full sympathy with the people of the states in their struggle for responsible government and liberalisation of the administrations in princely states, had said in no uncertain terms that the Indian states should form their own political organisations that need not be called Congress Committees. The states' people thought it was manifestly unjust for the Congress Working Committee to ban the formation of Congress Committees in the states, when as India's principal political organisation the Congress was fighting for the freedom of the whole country. The assumption on the part of the Working Committee that the states' people lacked mass action served only to add insult to injury. The states' people thought that national awakening and political upsurge were as much in evidence in the states as in the Provinces.

The fact is that the Haripura Resolution was an offshoot of the happenings in Mysore state. The Mysore State Congress had launched upon *Satyagraha* for achieving responsible government in the state under the aegis of the

Maharaja. In the course of the popular agitation, the State authorities pulled down the Congress flag which the demonstrators were carrying. This insult to the National flag (as the Congress flag was then called) infuriated the whole country. In spite of the fact that the Congress wielded power in as many as seven provinces at the time it could do nothing by way of calling the Mysore wrong-doers to account; nor could it do anything to ensure that similar happenings would not recur in other states. It was under the stress of this irremediable disability that the Congress thought of restraining the activities of Congress Committees working in princely states.

While speaking on the subject, several states workers got understandably worked up. Among those who criticised the Congress Working Committee Resolution and asked that it should be suitably amended were Indra Vidyavachaspati of Delhi, Premnath Bazaz of Kashmir, Paranal Munshi of Baroda, Narain Prasad of Orissa State, Rajgopalacharya of Mysore, Avadhesh Prasad Singh of Rewa, Khanolkar of Savantwadi, Panduranga Rao and Ismail Hirani of Hyderabad, Haribhau Masurkar of Indore and a few others. Prominent part was also taken in the proceedings by Balwantray Mehta, Jai Narain Vyas and Chudgar.

After various speakers had vented their thoughts and taken the Congress Working Committee to task for not giving the states' people their due, saner counsels prevailed, thanks to the sympathetic and tactful speech of the Chairman of the Convention who was none else than Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya. The Resolution was suitably amended, denuded of angry words and couched in moderate language only to voice the disappointment of the states' people at their not being allowed to set up Congress Committees in the princely territories. The Resolution expressed the hope that the official attitude of the Congress



Committee would be altered in favour of the Indian states people at the next Session of the Congress.

The Navasari Convention prepared a *draft resolution* with the idea of requesting the Congress to adopt it with a view to meeting the viewpoint of the states people. It was Dr. Pattabhi's handiwork. It ran as this follows:

"The Congress stands for the same political, social and economic freedom in the States as the rest of India and considers the States as an integral part of India, which cannot be separated. "Purna Swaraj" or Complete Independence which is the objective of the Congress, is for the whole of India inclusive of the States, for the integrity and unity of India must be maintained in freedom as it has been maintained in subjection. The only kind of federation that can be acceptable to the Congress, is one in which the States participate as free units enjoying the measure of democratic freedom as the rest of India."

This draft was accepted by the Congress and moved as an official resolution at the Haripura session.\*

The Convention reiterated its stand on the issue of the Federation. It condemned the federal scheme as contemplated in the Government of India Act, 1935, and expressed its determination to fight it tooth and nail till it was amended to the satisfaction of the states' people and the Indian National Congress. In the opinion of the Convention, no

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How much a section of the Congress leadership sympathised with the people of the states in their struggle, was evident from Subhash Bose's Presidential address at the Haripura session. After explaining the circumstances by which the Congress felt impelled to restrain its activities in the states, he declared: "There are people in the Congress like myself who would like the Congress participating more actively in the movement of the states people. I personally hope that in the near future it will be possible for the Indian National Congress to take a forward step and offer a helping hand to our fellow fighters in the states. Let us not forget they need our sympathy and our help."

"Crossroads—the words of Subhash Chandra Bose, 1938–40", page 6

scheme of federation could be acceptable to the people of the States which was not based upon : (a) responsible Government in the States, (b) provision to send elected representatives to the Constituent Assembly, and (c) grant of fundamental rights of citizenship to states' people and a guarantee for the protection of those rights to be incorporated in the Federal Constitution through the machinery of the Federal Court.

In the course of another Resolution, the Convention indirectly complimented the states in south India which were in a better position both in respect of enlightened governments and a better organised public opinion. The Convention exhorted the rulers of these states to be pioneers in the matter of political reforms. It also appealed to the people of south Indian states to continue to work in unison for achieving responsible government in their respective states.

In view of the fact that divergent opinions were being expressed about the situation obtaining in the states and various suggestions were being offered for improving the situation, the Convention suggested that a Commission be appointed by the Congress to study the problems of the states' people from all angles and to submit a detailed Report to the Congress as early as possible.

The Convention recorded its strong protest against the proposed transfer by the Government of India of more than 100 villages of the Ajmer-Merwara Province to the Jodhpur and Udaipur States against the will of the people of the areas concerned.

According to another resolution, it was decided to bring out an English Weekly on behalf of the All India States' People's Conference. This Weekly, "The States' People", was subsequently founded and it became the rallying point of agitation in all the states. It was also decided

that the proceedings of the A I S. P. C. should hereafter be conducted, as far as possible, in Hindustani so that a larger number of people may take part in and understand the proceedings

From the point of view of recording the history of the States' People's movement, the most remarkable aspect of the Navasari Convention was the speech of the Chairman, Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya. In a critical analysis of the states' people's problems, he clarified the various issues relating to all-India federation and suggested suitable remedies, keeping the interests of the states' people in view. Dr. Sitaramayya dealt with the various viewpoints expressed in India and abroad. He recalled that Lord Lothian had described the federal proposal as "the most difficult part of the scheme", since it attempted to marry democratic British India with feudal princedom in a single federation. According to Lord Lothian, even in British India basic civil liberties were yet to be statutorily established—civil liberties like the right of *Habeas Corpus*, freedom of speech and freedom of political association, which were in existence there only in part. He had also considered it inevitable that, as political consciousness grew, the princes, like the monarchs in Europe, were more and more to be required to assume the position of constitutional rulers. Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya quoted the following passage from Lord Lothian's speech

"Paramountcy certainly cannot be interpreted to mean that Great Britain has the duty of supporting a ruler in denying to his own subjects the very rights which have been established by the authority of *Parliament* throughout British India. How long this will take I cannot attempt to predict, but there are at least some causes for the view that Federation will make this process more smooth and less violent

than it may otherwise become. The relationship established by the Act between "British India and the States" is therefore, not nearly so inflexible as is commonly believed. Not only have the Princes no effective veto on the development of the Constitution itself except in so far as it affects autonomy in their own states, but when the movement for responsible institutions in the States has reached fruition, it will automatically remove the principal objections now raised to an all-India Federation and will eventually make possible the removal, by consent, of other anomalies in the Act."

Dr. Pattabhi wondered if the hopes regarding gradual democratisation of the states expressed by such well-meaning persons, will be allowed to materialise by the princes.

Dr. P. Sitarammaya also dwelt on the struggle that was going on in Mysore State, where following the adoption of the programme of non-cooperation at the Mysore State Congress convention held at Chitadrug, arrests of political workers had started. H. Dasappa was one of the first to be arrested. Though the State Government had accepted in principle the goal of representative government for the people, the Mysore State Congress was not satisfied unless responsible government was conceded immediately. As Dr. Pattabhi said, acceptance of the principle of self-government did not take the people very far. Serious issues arose from the struggle in Mysore for civil liberties and responsible government. He thought, however, that the Congress had to be vigilant and adopt a course of action after giving full thought to every aspect of the situation. Dr. Sitaramaya endorsed the general reaction of the states people to the Congress policy of vacillation. He did not agree with the resolution of the Congress directing that no Congress committees were to be established in Indian states and that

the internal struggle of the people of the states was not to be undertaken in the name of the Congress. He thought it was poor service of those who had identified themselves with the Congress in its national struggle and who had been carrying on the fight for internal reform in the name of the Congress committees. He almost completely identified himself with the views expressed by leaders of the states people as to the need for a change in the Congress attitude towards the states.

Happenings in the Mysore State also figured prominently in the Convention. Representatives of that State participating in the Navasari Convention said that the people there were determined to fight for their rights and for the establishment of responsible Government in Mysore. They gave an account of the discussions at the Convention of Mysore Congressmen held at Chitaldrug, which had adopted a programme of non co-operation. At this convention, it was also decided that no political prisoner would offer any self-defence. Reference in this connection was made of the arrest of H. Dasappa, a prominent advocate and politician of Mysore under Section 124-A.

On the whole, the Navasari Convention proved to be a good exercise in political organisation and formation of public opinion. It left a deep impact not only on the people of the states but also on the Congress which was now better able to appreciate the feelings and temper of the states people.

### Ludhiana Session of AISPC

*The next session of the All India States People's Conference* was held at Ludhiana in 1939. Considering the timing of the Conference, the political climate in the country and the decisions taken at Ludhiana, this session may be considered to be the most crucial in the history of the States

People's movement. There was evidence that every important factor having a bearing on the freedom struggle in the Indian states had started undergoing a change for the better, to the advantage of the agitators. Thanks to the persistent efforts of the states people and their leaders, there was a ferment among the subjects of these princely territories. There were signs of awakening all over and the people were becoming conscious of their rights and, what is more, impatient of their burdens and disabilities.

Almost in every Indian state, big or small, political organisations had begun to raise their voice in favour of responsible government and the grant of civil liberties. Agitations in big states like Hyderabad, Kashmir, Travancore and Mysore had spread the message of freedom and in a way they demonstrated the futility of repression. To have a proper appreciation of this session of the AISPC held about six months before the war broke out, it would be helpful to know the political and constitutional background in India.

The attitude of the Paramount Power, particularly the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, howsoever cautious or guarded it might have been, lent support, at least indirectly, to the demand for a change. The Viceroy had been actively canvassing for the amalgamation of smaller states with a view to providing better civil and judicial administration. His emphasis on certain rights of the people of the smaller states had made an impact on the conditions prevailing even in bigger states.

During 1939-42, a majority of the smaller states in Kathiawad, Gujrat states, Central India, Orissa and Punjab Hill states had accepted the principle of cooperative grouping. According to this scheme, sponsored by the Viceroy smaller states were brought together for certain administrative and judicial matters.

But the most important change was in the attitude and strategy of the Indian National Congress. The Congress had enunciated a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the states. By and large, it had stuck to that policy scrupulously and laid emphasis on the responsibility of states people themselves to organise the people and thus acquire such strength as would compel the princes to listen to them and concede their demand. That was the idea of Mahatma Gandhi, who had enunciated the policy of non-interference. Thanks, however, to the persistence of the states people and the help rendered by Dr. Pattabhi, at Haripura the Congress altered its stand considerably, though not fully meeting the demand of the states people by *withdrawing the ban put on Congress committees being set up in the states*

No doubt, the Congress had always been in sympathy with these people's demand for self-government, but their sympathy had now changed into administrative expediency. They could not allow Indian states affairs to be the exclusive preserve of the Political Department functioning from New Delhi. The Provincial Governments asserted their right to shape the Central policy in a matter which affected one-fourth of the country's population

As would have been expected, Mahatma Gandhi was the first to give an inkling of the coming change and to recognise the compulsion of events. In a leading article in the *Haripuran*, captioned 'States and the People', he had dilated upon the reasons calling for a change in the Congress policy of non-interference in states affairs. Though he did not say so explicitly, his words left none in doubt that now a change in the Congress policy was inevitable. Mahatma Gandhi said: "I am responsible for the policy of non-interference hitherto followed by the Congress; it is impossible for me to defend it in the face of

injustice perpetrated in the states." Mahatma Gandhi declared that although under the Constitution provincial Ministers had no power over the States, they had a moral responsibility regarding what happened in the States within their borders. Congress Ministries were, therefore, morally bound to take notice of gross misrule and to tender advice to Paramount Power as to what should be done in their opinion to stop this misrule. I have no doubt, the Mahatma said, that if the Paramount Power is to enjoy friendly relations with the Ministries, it had to give a sympathetic ear to this advice.

Added force had been lent to these events by agitation in a large number of states and the oppressive use of force by the Central and Indian states Governments. In Orissa states, for example, brutal force had to be used to suppress popular agitation, resulting in several deaths. In Jaipur, Nabha, Patiala, Kapurthala etc. popular agitation was sought to be suppressed by force, and leaders of the agitation were meted out ghastly treatment. In bigger states, particularly Hyderabad, Kashmir and Travancore, state governments had tried to give a communal turn to political agitation and thus justify the use of armed force used by them against the agitators. In Hyderabad, it was alleged to be a Hindu agitation against a Muslim ruler; in Kashmir, it was said to be a Muslim majority in revolt against a Hindu ruler and in Travancore Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer attempted to dub the agitation a diabolical move on the part of the Christians to overthrow a Hindu state. On top of all this came the views expressed by the workers of the AISPC at the Navasari Convention. This made a decisive impact on the Congress leadership.

The denial of sympathetic hearing to the states people, the assured help of the Congress Party now administering more than half of India, and the complete inability and



incapacity of the princely order to adjust itself to the coming change, all these factors had now vested the States People's freedom movement with a new importance and a fresh vigour.

This was the background in which the All-India States People's Conference met at Ludhiana early in 1939. The scenes of enthusiasm which characterised the session were unprecedented. Probably no other session of the Conference was attended by such a large number of delegates, representing the states. To cap it, Jawaharlal Nehru, President of the Indian National Congress and the most dynamic Congress leader had been elected President of the session. The result was that one saw the same upsurge of popular enthusiasm there which was normally associated with the annual sessions of the Congress. Preparations were more or less on the same level. Press coverage and attendance at the session were also of the same order.

In his Presidential address, Jawaharlal summed up the whole situation in his characteristic way. After giving an analysis of the situation obtaining in the Indian states and stating reasons as to why the people in British India could not afford to be indifferent to the agitation in the states, Jawaharlal referred to signs of conflict, friction and violence all round in the world, leading inevitably to chaos. He continued "None of us wants this chaos in India, for that is no prelude to freedom. Yet while we recognise that our strength grows, the forces of disruption and disintegration, of communalism and provincialism, of irresponsibility and narrow-mindedness also grow. Yet in India, there are gleams of hope, though dark clouds assail us. And the brightest of these rays comes from the newly awakened people of the states. We, who presume to shoulder the burden of their struggle, have a heavy responsibility and it will require all our courage and our wisdom to discharge

that faithfully. Strong language will not help us; it is often a sign of weakness and a substitute for action. It is action that is commanded today, wise and effective action which takes us speedily to our goal, controls the forces of disruption, and builds up the united India of our dream."

Referring to the states people's struggle in the context of the larger nationalist movement in India, Nehru said : "The freedom of the people of the states is a big enough thing, yet it is a part of the larger freedom of India, and till we gain that larger freedom, it is a struggle for us. If the federation is imposed upon us, we shall fight it and sweep it away. Wherever the British Power intervenes against the people in the states, we shall have to face it. The time is approaching when the final solution has to come—the Constituent Assembly of all the Indian people framing the Constitution of a free and democratic India.

"The States' People's Conference has done good work in the past but this has been only a fraction of the work it might have done. It must now turn to the efficient organisation of all its activities so that it might become a clearing house for all that pertains to the states, and a source of help and inspiration to all our comrades in the struggle. It must help in building up Praja Mandals or people's organisations in the states. It must take care to steer clear of all communalism, and it must above all remember, and make others remember, that non-violence is the basis of this struggle.

"It is our great good fortune that in this struggle we have the backing of the National Congress and the support of its leaders. Most cheering of all is the thought that we have Gandhiji to guide and inspire us."

Several resolutions were adopted by the Ludhiana session of the AISPC. The most important of them defined the concept of viability in relation to the Indian States. It said that states with a population of 20 lakhs and a revenue

of Rs 50 lakhs alone could be considered as viable administrative units. Excepting such states, all other states must be grouped together or merged in neighbouring states or Provinces. It was a positive approach to the problem of the states, and there is evidence to believe that even the Political Department and the Viceroy took the Conference seriously. In a way, the resolution was no more than an improvement upon the thoughts of the Viceroy himself, the only difference being that the AISPC had come out with a clear cut definition of viability dividing states into two categories, namely, states which had a right to continue to exist and states which must cease to exist as independent units of administration.

Other resolutions, nearly all of them, referred to the popular agitations in different states.\* They congratulated the states people and condemned the use of force against their agitation. One resolution congratulated a ruler on his bold decision to have a new Constitution for his state based on responsible government. This was the small State of Aundh in Western India. The ruler certainly deserved credit for his boldness and initiative, and the States People's Conference wanted to acknowledge this fact publicly, so that other rulers might also follow this good example and remove the cause of conflict with their subjects.

### After the Outbreak of War

The declaration of war by the Government of India in September, 1939, cast its inevitable shadow on all constitutional and nation-building activities in India. Finding their continuance in office in the Provinces incompatible with the nature and manner of the declaration of war by the Viceroy on behalf of India, all the Congress Governments in the Provinces had resigned in protest. These developments could

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\*See next chapter.

not but affect the tempo of the states people's movement which had been attracting wide attention and gaining much strength since the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy. Linked as the all-India States People's Conference was ideologically and directionally with the Indian National Congress, Congress Ministries' resignation from office automatically sent the Praja Mandals and other units of the AISPC into wilderness.

But there was nothing new in that situation, for there was never any love lost between the princely Darbars and the States People's Conference. Unlike the Indian National Congress, the AISPC had ever remained in the opposition. The succession of events following the declaration of war, therefore, had no other effect on the States' People's movement except putting its activities a little out of focus, as had happened in respect of the activities of all political organisations agitating for constitutional advance in the country. The state of dormancy, however, lasted only two years. With Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour and her joining on the side of the Axis Powers, the political situation warmed up as a result of anxiety in the United Kingdom to enlist, if possible, active support of the Indian people in the war effort. This anxiety reached its culmination in the visit of Sir Stafford Cripps to India for arriving at some settlement of the constitutional problem, which may be acceptable to the British as well as the Indian people as a whole.

Much of this political activity was being staged in British India whose political organisations formed the principal party to which representatives of the British Government addressed their proposals. The AISPC never came directly in the picture, except when the Congress referred to the states problem and pleaded for constitutional government in those territories. Nevertheless, the AISPC continued to function with the same vigour as before,

Though the state governments found it now easier to curb all political agitations on the plea of helping the war effort, the people's movement could never be suppressed. In some states it was driven out of their boundaries, while in others it either went underground or its leaders suffered the consequences of the official policy of suppression.

After the Viceroy had brought India into the war by his declaration, the first move of the AISPC was to hold a meeting of its Standing Committee in Bombay in October, 1939. At this meeting the leaders of the states movement pointed out the incongruity of the princes expressing their support of the principle of democracy in Europe while maintaining undiluted autocracy in their own territories. The Standing Committee refused to accept the commitments of the princes and the offer of resources of their states for the war and condemned the introduction of the newly enacted repressive measures on grounds of helping the war effort. The Committee invited the princes to declare their acceptance of the objective of full responsible government in their states and to undertake to give effect to it in the immediate future. The Standing Committee reiterated its earlier stand that the British Government and the Indian princes could not be allowed to take refuge under the so-called treaty provisions to deny freedom to the people of the states for all times. The Committee pointed out that the doings of the British Government in the Indian states were flagrantly at variance with the war aims of the Allies.

The Standing Committee adopted a number of resolutions on the political situation in India, particularly about the demands of the states people and their attitude to the war in Europe. Generally it towed the line of the Indian National Congress and opposed the war effort on the same grounds on which the Congress had refused to endorse the

Viceroy's declaration of war on behalf of India, leading to the resignation of the popular Ministries in the provinces.

The next meeting of the Standing Committee of the AISPC was held at Poona in July, 1940, with Jawaharlal Nehru in the chair. It was attended, among others, by Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Jamnalal Bajaj, Balwantray Mehta, Kashinath Rao Vaidya, Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din, Sarangdhar Das, G. Ramachandran, Shamsheer Singh Gill, S. V. Shikhre, Gopi Krishna Vijayavargiya, Jai Narayan Vyas, Kanhayalal Vaidya and Talib Hussain. Important questions regarding the organisation of the Conference were discussed on the first day of the meeting which was also attended by prince Appa Sahib, the Prime Minister of Aundh, who explained the implications of the scheme of constitutional reforms recently introduced in that state.

On the following day was held the Convention of the All-India States People's Conference. In the course of his presidential remarks, Jawaharlal surveyed the situation in the states since its last meeting in Bombay in October, 1939. He laid stress on reorganisation of the Conference work in view of the enhanced activities of the Conference and the increasing interest taken in the states problem by the country at large.

At this meeting, Brijlal Biyani, Deo Suman of Tehri-Garhwal and Mridula Sarabhai were present by special invitation.

The Convention adopted a number of resolutions, one of which set up a committee consisting of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Balwantray Mehta and Brijlal Biyani for making necessary arrangements to bring about a weekly\* newspaper on behalf of the AISPC.

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\* A resolution to this effect had been adopted at one of the sessions of the AISPC, but it was yet to be implemented.

Kashinath Rao Vaidya of Hyderabad after a suitable speech moved the following resolution

' In view of the rapid development of the world situation as well as the situation in India, and the probability of far-reaching political changes in India in the near future, leading to complete independence of the country, the Convention is of opinion that the situation in the states must be brought in line with this changing order so that the states may fit into the structure of Indian independence. The recent course of events also shows that small independent states cannot long continue to exist anywhere in the world and they will inevitably be absorbed in large and compact federation or Empire states. While the Convention is of opinion that peace and stability can ultimately only be established in the world when all nations are free and co operate together in a world order, it is clear that even in the immediate future Indian freedom can only be maintained on the basis of Indian unity and the close co-operation of free democratic units in the national freedom. There can be no such co operation between democratic and feudal units, which will inevitably conflict with each other. The same measure of democratic freedom must thus prevail in all parts of India, whether Provinces or States, and each unit must join the free Indian federation on equal terms

"The Convention is, therefore, of opinion that any delay at this stage in the democratisation of the states is not only injurious to the people of the states but also to the freedom of India as a whole

"The Convention trusts therefore, that the Rulers will adapt themselves to these changing circumstances and putting themselves in line with

their people, march together to the common destiny of a free democratic state, as an integral part of independent India. The Convention hopes that they will declare their faith in Indian unity and freedom and will take steps to establish responsible government in their states, and thus prepare and qualify themselves for taking part in the Constituent Assembly which will draw up India's constitution.

"The Convention would at the same time impress upon the people of the states that real progress ultimately depends on their own organised strength. In the days of trial and testing that are coming to India, the people of the states will have to share in the struggle and its burdens, and they must prepare and organise themselves to this end."

### **Support from Mysore**

The resolution was seconded by K. T. Bhashyam of Mysore who observed that the Rulers of states must read the signs of the times and realise that only by granting responsible government could states fit themselves into the future federation of free India.

The resolution was passed unanimously.

Jamnalal Bajaj then moved the following resolution :

"This Convention while feeling it difficult and even impractical to prescribe a common detailed programme of work and agitation for the various states at various stages of social, educational and political development is clearly of opinion that the struggle in different states has shown that the immediate need is to strengthen the people's organisations and to establish closer contact with the people of their respective states through carefully planned constructive programme which will emphasise



literacy and political education of the masses through peaceful propaganda of the issues involved. While this Convention does not want to hold back the people of any state who feel confident of their strength to take more advanced steps, it desires to impress upon the people of the states that a sustained struggle for their freedom inevitably demands fuller and greater preparation than has generally been evident up till now "

The resolution was seconded by G Ramachandran of Travancore who explained to the audience his own experience when they first started the movement in Travancore and the difficulties they had to undergo in that connection.

This resolution was also carried unanimously

Many workers from Hyderabad, Travancore, Mysore and Rajputana and Central India States, Punjab Orissa and Deccan States gave an account of the conditions prevailing in their respective states Over 200 delegates from all parts of India were present

Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Acharya Narendra Dev also addressed the Convention, which concluded after four hours of discussions.

On the constitutional front an important development took place with the arrival in India of Sir Stafford Cripps in 1942 with his new proposals. So far the states had virtually enjoyed the power to veto responsibility at the Centre. The Princes always claimed it and the British had readily conceded it. But the position that was assigned to the states in the Cripps Plan altered the position for the first time The Draft Plan primarily concerned itself with British India and left the states virtually to adjust themselves to the new situation by "a revision of their treaty arrangements" Though the Cripps Plan was rejected by

Indian political parties and withdrawn by the British Government, it had served one useful purpose, It had deflated the position of the states as an insurmountable impediment to the establishment of responsible popular government at the Centre.

In the country-wide disturbances which occurred in August, 1942, the states people did not participate in an organised manner as their compatriots in several provinces had done. The All-India States People's Conference did not directly involve itself in the struggle though unfortunately it never prevented the State Governments from using the repressive laws in their armoury against public agitations of all kinds. In their attempt to demonstrate their loyalty to the British, some of the states resorted to oppressive laws even more vigorously than had been done in British India. In Patiala, Jhabua and some Kathiawad and Rajasthan states tillers' agitation for agrarian reforms was suppressed in a manner as if it was a political move to spread disaffection against the ruler.

When the war ended in 1945, the states people were as bitter and frustrated as ever before. The war had, however, released new forces which were destined to change the face of continents. With the labour party winning the elections in U. K., hope revived in India. Mr. Attlee's subsequent moves confirmed the impression that this time the British Government meant business. The new situation brought with it its own challenges which it was for Indian leaders as a whole to meet. The states people and their All-India Conference allied themselves firmly with the Indian National Congress. What role the latter played vis-a-vis the states in difficult two years that followed and to what effect the former co-operated in the national effort for integration has been described at some length in a subsequent chapter.

The last two sessions of the All-India States People's Conference, the first one held at Udaipur in December, 1945

## LAST TWO SESSIONS

and the second one at Gwalior in 1947 were typical in some respects of the changes that had started taking place in the country with the end of the war and the coming of the Labour Party in power in U. K. These were the only sessions held within the states

The Udaipur session was presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru who had already joined the Interim Government at the Centre as Vice-President of the Viceroy's Executive Council. The Government of the State, though it cannot be said to have participated in the Conference, did not obstruct its proceedings and the Maharaja of Udaipur expressed a desire to meet the president of the Conference and had talks with him, which he did a few days later.

From the speeches made and the resolution adopted at the Conference, one could have a clear indication of the fact that the change of political atmosphere visible all over the country had also permeated the bounds of the Indian States. Though the fight for responsible government in states was still to continue, many an old postulate had already become an axiom. The controversy, for example, about civic right and representation of the people in the administration were, *in theory at least, no longer in dispute now*. Apart from certain petty rulers who were either incapable of appreciating political happenings or were otherwise blind to the coming tide, the princely world had begun to recognise the need to concede some of the major demands of their people

The Udaipur session took note of these trends. It felicitated the princes like the rulers of Aundh, Cochin, Gwalior and Bhavnagar on the bold step they had taken in conceding reforms voluntarily and reiterated its demand for the acceptance of responsible government by other rulers. However, in the light of what was happening in a large number of states, these exceptional cases, alas, paled into insignificance. In many states repression was still in vogue

In some cases, clever princes had set up rival political organisations to fight the Praja Mandals and the All-India States People's Conference. Agrarian trouble was still to evidence in many of them. The AISPC took note of all these cases and condemned the rulers in no uncertain terms. In some of them, Praja Mandal workers were being treated harshly in jails. It also expressed concern at the appalling conditions and social and economic backwardness in a majority of the states. The jagiri system which in many cases was even more oppressive than the state administrations came in for special criticism.

Another proof that things had been on the move on the political stage came from one of the resolutions adopted by the Conference. The Ludhiana session of the AISPC had defined viability of states and administrative units in terms of population and revenue. It had laid down that only such states could remain as separate administrative units which had a population of at least 20 lakhs and a revenue of 50 lakhs. It had suggested that the rest of the states should be either grouped or merged with neighbouring provinces. The Udaipur session changed all this, which threw more light on the arithmetics of the states problem. While it accepted the old norms of population and revenue, it made it clear that the states which did not fulfil these standards must be wound up as administrative units. There was a ring of definiteness in their resolution this time and it was taken for granted that the smaller states had had their day. But in spite of what the princes had been doing to the people, the Conference pleaded that "suitable provisions should be made for the present rulers and their personal dignity and position safeguarded" in the event of the merger of their states. Such was the traditional loyalty and the feeling of softness of the people for their rulers.

The Conference reiterated its demand that the states should be given representation in the Constituent Assembly of India through their elected representatives and not

through the nominees of the princess. It did not waste words on indicating the nature of federation that India should have, for things had already started moving in the right direction. The approach of the AISPC was now more positive and full of expectancy.

## THE GWALIOR SESSION

In April, 1947, was held the last session of the All-India States People's Conference at Gwalior. The 18 months that separated it from the Udaipur session had witnessed changes of such far reaching importance that the views held earlier and the decisions taken at Udaipur now looked out of date. For example, the Gwalior Session further raised the criteria of viability. It said that only those states could continue as separate administrative units which had a population of 50 lakhs or more and an annual revenue of at least 3 crores. This was symbolic of the people's rising hopes and symptomatic of the new order of things. India was on the threshold of freedom and the Paramountcy was going to end. The future of the states had, therefore, been put in the crucible by the British Government itself. The main point was the kind of mould they should have for determining the future shape of the princely territories.

In contrast to the atmosphere of optimism, all round progress and clear signs that at long last the skein of the States problem was going to be disentangled, reports came of harrowing tales of repression from many states. If most of the princes were outwardly reserved and round themselves unable to react to popular demands sympathetically, some of them were openly hostile to those demands out of sheer despair and helplessness. A few of them like Travancore, Hyderabad, Kashmir and Bhopal interpreted the British Government's declaration about the termination of Paramountcy as freedom to the princes to set up independent kingdoms. Travancore made no secret of it. Nor did

Hyderabad and some other rulers who started thinking in terms of consolidating their territories as if India was going to be balkanised.

These were disturbing trends. Luckily for the AISPC the responsibility to meet this challenge was no longer theirs. It had now shifted on to the future Government of India. The Conference, however, thought it its duty to protest against and condemn oppressive laws and cruel treatment of their workers by a number of states.

A very important decision taken by the AISPC at the Gwalior session was the unequivocal rejection of the proposed grouping sponsored by the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar and some rulers of the Deccan States. Under the advice of Gandhiji, Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal, leaders of the Conference saw through the game. Mahatma Gandhi had clearly told the princes that what they were keen to accomplish did not belong to them. That is to say, it was for the people of the states to decide their future and not for the princes. The best that the princes could do was to concede responsible government and set up representative institutions in their respective territories. It would then be for such governments and their representatives to meet and decide the future set-up of Saurashtra or the Deccan States or any other group of states. Gandhiji's clear-cut views and the AISPC's resolution finished with one stroke the attempt of the princes to take up in their hands the political leadership of their people.

The Conference drew pointed attention of the people against the machinations of the Paramount Power, as exemplified in its decision to allow certain parts of Bastar state to be leased out to the Nizam's Government for exploiting the mining resources of those parts. The charge became particularly valid because the Raja of Bastar was a minor and the administration of the state was in the hands of the

Political Department The Conference declared that the people of Bastar could not be bound by any agreement entered into secretly between the Paramount Power and the Nizam's Government without consulting the people of Bastar

As the Constituent Assembly of India had already started functioning, the Conference voiced its demand in strong terms for popular representatives of the states to be sent to it In principle, however, it accepted that to begin with this function might be carried on by the negotiating Committee proposed by the Constituent Assembly.

The All-India States People's Conference, it may be noted, held in all 8 sessions during its life span of about 20 years It was now coming to the end of its labours There was a time when the states people were at pains to explain that as a political entity India was one and indivisible They thought that this theory was not being fully accepted by the Congress, which insisted on giving priority to the problems of the British Provinces, leaving the states to be contented with its sympathy and moral support and fend for themselves

That stage was now passed Coming events had already made this controversy outmoded In the eyes of those who were moulding the destiny of the country there was now no difference between the princely states and the provinces, just as no distinction could be made between the All-India States People's Conference and the Indian National Congress

Another feature of these happenings on the eve of independence was that they were a pointer to the re-distribution of provinces on the basis of language The merger of the states brought this question to the fore In his declaration conceding responsible government, the Maharaja of Cochin had made a reference to united Kerala in clear

terms. Similarly, the Gwalior session protested against certain changes made by the Political Department in its administrative set-up. It had transferred the States of Janjira, Jaora, Surgana and Dang from the Deccan States Agency, and this the AISPC did not like, for it thought that such a change was against the cultural and linguistic affinities of the people of these states. It meant in other words that the linguistic and cultural question was going to be one of the criteria determining the future grouping or merger of states.

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## Facets of Struggle and Resistance

The freedom struggle in the Indian states, in the modern political sense, was waged for not more than two decades—1927 to 1946. There had been demonstrations, uprisings and agrarian troubles in some of the states even earlier, but all that was largely spasmodic and generally followed a uniform pattern, people protesting and agitating for the redress of certain grievances. Such moves, though directed against the administration of the state in question, were not motivated by the ideal of freedom or the desire on the part of the people to take over the reins of the administration in their own hands. Pre-1927 happenings may therefore be left out of account for purposes of our story.

Ever since the turn of the century, several developments which had taken place on the economic, fiscal and communications front willynilly brought the states and the provinces closer. As we have seen this arrangement made by the British for the development of the country as a whole did not find favour with the princes and they lost no opportunity to protest against it. But those changes suited the imperial purpose. The paramount power was never

therefore in a mood to entertain those protests. Though the country as a whole, including the states, may be said to have made considerable progress during the first 25 or 30 years of the century as a result of their involvement in the larger economic and communications development, yet those happenings as also the years when they took place do not fall within the purview of our account.

Coming to the period 1927-46, one finds a change in the mood of the states people, who had now thought of grappling not only with the symptoms but the root causes of their misery. Having come to the conclusion that they could improve their lot only by replacing the autocratic rule in the states by some kind of popular administrations, the people for the first time began to demand a share in the governance of their respective states. In harbouring this aspiration and in actually launching their campaign the states people found the example of the Indian National Congress handy. To help the states people in their struggle suited the Congress as much as it suited the subjects of princely territories to obtain guidance from the latter. But it would be neither easy nor profitable to attempt a connected or strictly chronological account of popular agitations which occurred in all the states. Firstly, the states were too many in number and too varied in size and character. Any such attempt is bound to be repetitive, if not boring. Consequently, we have followed the random sampling method, particularly so far as the smaller states are concerned, picking up typical movements and agitations in different states. This account coupled with a fuller account of the resistance movement in bigger states would, it is hoped, give a clear idea of the nature of the freedom struggle waged by the states' people, as also the part played by the All India States' People's Conference in this struggle.

## WESTERN INDIA STATES

Let us first of all take up the Kathiawad and Gujarat states which between themselves accounted for over 300 of the Princely territories in India. To be exact, in Kathiawad the total number of states were 277 of which only 7 were classed as "larger" or salute states. Baroda which was one of the bigger states had another 79 smaller states coming under the jurisdiction of the Resident at Baroda.

The first rumblings of popular discontent and a demand for people's participation in the administration in Western India states were heard as a result of the severity of the agrarian and forest laws of those states. These laws and much else there were based on the feudal pattern, as old as the lagoons of Kathiawad. To enrich their resources further, the rulers of these states, particularly larger ones like Jamnagar, Rajkot, Bhavanagar, Rajpipla, etc. had evolved a technique of creating trade monopolies, which naturally resulted in the sale of the articles of daily use at a higher price within these territories than the prices prevailing in British India.

Political consciousness among the people of these states was roused quite early as a result of the formation of the Kathiawad States' People's Conference in 1920. That this organisation was a vocal and active forum is proved by the fact that Mahatma Gandhi presided over one of its annual sessions in 1925. That was Gandhiji's first direct association with the Indian states' problem. He advised the people to unite and ask for their rights, but at the same time he declared himself as the well wisher of the princes and advised them to look upon their states as a sacred trust. He also asked them to introduce reforms in administration on their own. Gandhiji's efforts brought the people of Kathiawad close to one another, giving them strength to stand up against the autocratic rule of the princes, but his advice went *unheeded so far as the princes were concerned.*

There were large-scale popular agitations in Jamnagar in 1927-28 against the oppressive policies of the Jamsaheb.\* That was the time when leaders of the states' people's movement had started thinking in terms of an all-India organisation to fight for freedom of the states' people. These small beginnings led to the foundation of the A.I.S. P.C., as we have already seen.

The best that one can do to have a clear idea of the resistance movement and the nature of struggle in the Western India States is to give a summary of what is known as the Rajkot episode. Though the happenings that took place in Rajkot towards the close of the thirties related only to one state, they epitomise the political conditions and the pattern of resistance witnessed in other states of Western India at that time and in later years.

### THE RAJKOT EPISODE

By virtue of its size, population and general importance, Rajkot was considered to be a small states even in Kathiawad. But it had acquired some prominence in Western India for various other reasons. Firstly, it was centrally situated in Kathiawad and the Rajkot town was the biggest and one of the most flourishing cities in the Kathiawad peninsula. Secondly, the Residency where the Resident for Kathiawad States lived was situated in Rajkot. This had made this town virtually the capital of Kathiawad. Thirdly, the Residency area across the railway line in Rajkot was a British island surrounded by statelty India. This town had therefore two faces—one representing the territory of Indian states and the other of British India, the two artificially separated by a railway track. Yet this contiguity far from being irksome had assumed a peculiar importance so far as it heightened the sense of contrast in the general living conditions, in the matter of civil liberties and in economic conditions prevailing in the states and in British India.

Rajkot in 1938-39 presented a sight of frustration and discontent. Of frustration was born people's determination to fight for self-government. The ruler's indifference towards matters of state and his habit of leaving everything in the hands of his Dewan, Darbar Virawala, an intriguing and unscrupulous man, helped the fire of discontent to spread. United action on the part of the people was easy enough, for three-fourths of the people of Rajkot state lived in the town of Rajkot. Changing conditions in neighbouring Bombay Province and the general awakening among the states' people encouraged the people of Rajkot to launch their movement for responsible government under the leadership of UN Dhebar.

Unwisely enough, Dewan Virawala had provided much grist to the mill of discontent. He treated the State Assembly with disdain, convened it only occasionally and often short circuited it. Important decisions were taken without the Assembly's knowledge. He encouraged the ruler in the pursuit of his extravagant habits, so that the Thakore began to claim for his personal expenses half the revenues of the state. Virawala hit upon the idea of creating monopolies in trade, known locally as *Ijaras*. The result was that people living on one side of the railway track paid more for articles of daily use like ice match-boxes, electric goods, radio sets, etc. than people living on the other side of the track in the British Indian territory paid for better stuff.

Conditions were fast becoming intolerable. As the tempo of resistance rose the demand for Virawala's dismissal was voiced. Since the grievances of the people were genuine and the paramount power did not want matters to go to a head after the Congress had taken over office in Bombay, the Resident advised the Thakore to have another Dewan. A retired British civilian, Sir Patrick Cadell, was appointed in place of Virawala, but the Thakore managed

to retain his former Dewan as an adviser. Thus apparently while the change had taken place, the old dispensation stayed, as Virawala continued to pull wires from behind the curtain.

Far from assuaging public feelings, this arrangement only exasperated them. The people's determination to have full control over administration through the establishment of responsible government became now all the more grimmer. They launched a non-violent movement of boycott. All products of state mills were boycotted. Depositors withdrew their money from the State Bank, people refused to bid when monopolies were auctioned and in contravention of the state laws, contraband trade in match boxes and other prohibited commodities gained a new fillip. The people of the town and the Kisans in the 60 villages of the state were well united. Prohibitory orders could not prevent them from holding public meetings. Sir Patrick, it must be admitted, showed considerable leniency in dealing with the resisters. To that extent, he escaped the wrath of the people and Virawala became its target. Sir Patrick also tried to negotiate with leaders of the movement, but after a few meetings, negotiations were given up as fruitless. Popular agitation continued to gain strength day by day.

Meanwhile the situation which was developing in Rajkot had its repercussions in neighbouring states of Kathiawad. The agitation in Rajkot became an excellent instrument of propaganda for public workers, who began to draw lists of their grievances against their respective Dewans. The Rulers did not react altogether unfavourably, and some of them, notably the Ruler of Wankaner, responded well by redressing some of the grievances of his people.

As the situation was deteriorating, enlisting support of Congress leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and after sounding the Political Department which was keen to avoid complications, a new Council of Administration was set up.

The Thakore was its chairman, Sir Patrick Vice-Chairman, with two other members, both of them being nominees of Virawala. For several days the new Council had negotiations with representatives of the people, but nothing came out of it. Soon after Sardar Patel visited Rajkot. His presence inspired the movement and he laid before his audience a well-considered programme of action. The boycott movement was further strengthened. People refused to participate even in the Dussehra Darbar and the Thakore drove through the deserted streets of Rajkot with not a soul to greet him. In order to be effective the people cut short their demands to two, namely, redress of their grievances and grant of responsible government.

It was apparent that happenings in Rajkot were fast heading towards a crisis. An intriguing situation had developed. On the Thakore had been foisted a Dewan whom he neither trusted nor respected. He continued to be guided by Virawala, his former Dewan. In the new Council, Sir Patrick was in a minority of one. The Political Department was not prepared to take any strong action against the Thakore. Nor was it prepared to allow an Indian Chief to dismiss his Dewan a British civilian. To end this impasse they continued to put pressure on both and tried to bring about reconciliation which never came. Thus neither the Thakore nor the Dewan was free to do as he liked. By pretending to remain neutral the Paramount Power created an unfortunate situation both for the state and the state's people by its half hearted interference.

The only alternative to the continued indifference of the Thakore and his administration to the demand of the people was launching of agitation by the Rajkot Paraja Mandal. This agitation which the administration sought to suppress with a heavy hand created quite a stir in political circles in Bombay Presidency which was being administered

by a Congress Ministry at the time. The Bombay Government indirectly deplored the agitation and left none in doubt as to its sympathies with the people of Rajkot. Individual Ministers went a step further in supporting the agitation of the Praja Mandal in Rajkot.

In August, 1938, U. N. Dhebar, leader of the Rajkot people's movement was arrested on the charge of holding a public meeting in contravention of prohibitory orders. After a few days, however, he was released. This only infused greater confidence among the people and the satyagraha campaign continued unabated. Sardar Patel, who was president of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee, could not have been a silent witness to all this. He sent his daughter, Maniben to Rajkot to see things and then report to him. In Rajkot she was put under arrest. This was followed by the entry in Rajkot of Mridulaben, daughter of Sarladevi who was a resident of Rajkot. She too was arrested by the state government,

Meanwhile the Rajkot State People's Conference met in September, 1938. In spite of government's opposition and certain loyal citizens' conspiracy, the conference was held and it was attended by Sardar Patel. The Sardar made a forceful speech and demanded responsible government for the people of Rajkot. The conference subsequently embodied this demand in an official resolution adopted by it.

Although Dhebar conducted the fight on the lines of the Congress campaign, he did not drag the name of the Congress in it. He built up his case for responsible government for Rajkot on the ground of past mal-administration and as a safeguard for good government in future. The popular movement had overwhelming support of the people. Among the supporters were ex-Dewans and retired senior officials



of states, like R V Patwari and Hari Shaubkar Pandya. This showed that even moderate sections of the people of Kathiawad were fed up with the vagaries of the rulers and their capricious administrations.

Protests against monopolies and taxes coupled with the demand for the restoration of the political rights conferred on the people by the late Thakore Saheb were voiced at numerous public meetings. As a guarantee for good administration, especially when the ruler took no interest, the people wanted the Diwan to be responsible to them. 'The income of the State came from the people and not from the Durbar, therefore, we should be allowed to control the expenditure', said the people's spokesmen.

Meanwhile there was a change in the Diwanship, Sir Patrick Cadell, the seventy-year-old retired civilian of British India, appeared on the scene and promulgated prohibitory orders calculated to stifle the movement. They had the effect of spurring the people on to further suffering and sacrifices, which they bore cheerfully.

In December 1938 Sardar Patel visited Rajkot to advise the Praja Mandal leaders and guide them in the course of the negotiations which had been started between them, the ruler of Rajkot and the Dewan, Sir Patrick Cadell. On December 26, a settlement was arrived at, which was duly announced in the Rajkot State Gazette. Sardar Patel had advised the people of Rajkot to accept it. One of the terms was that a council would be set up to advise the State Government in all matters and that seven members of this council would be appointed by the ruler on the recommendation of Sardar Patel.

Only a few weeks later when this Council was constituted, Sardar Patel's recommendations were discarded and members other than those recommended by him were nominated by the ruler. This naturally enraged the Sardar who announced resumption of the struggle against the state government.

This development made Mahatma Gandhi take a still more active part in the Rajkot struggle. He described the going back of the ruler on the terms of the settlement as "a cold-blooded breach of a solemn covenant".\*

The Rajkot struggle now became an all-India affair and attracted notice throughout the country. As a protest against the breach of faith committed by the ruler and the nefarious part played in the whole affair by the ex-Dewan, Virawala, Mahatma Gandhi went on a fast in the first week of March, 1939. This complicated matters still further. The Viceroy, who was very keen to arrest the rot and restore normal conditions, asked the Chief Justice of India, Sir Maurice Gwyer to look into the matter and report whether the ruler of Rajkot was really guilty of a breach of faith. The award which Sir Maurice Gwyer gave conceded, though indirectly, that the breach of faith had been committed by the Thakore.

For a time it appeared that things were straightening in Rajkot, since the Thakore, Virawala and the Political Department appeared anxious to arrive at a fresh settlement acceptable to all the parties. While these efforts were continuing, suddenly Mahatma Gandhi again decided to launch on what he called a purificatory fast of 21 days on the plea that he felt that by having resorted to fast earlier

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\*"Harijan", dated 4.2.1939

he had been guilty of coercion. Fortunately Gandhiji came out safe from this ordeal of 21 days' fast, though during this period the whole country tried to dissuade him from this grave step which had caused nation-wide concern and suspense.

This incident showed how far the rulers of states could go in retaining their hold on the administration, how far the people of the states were prepared to resist them and to what extent these goings-on in small and big states could create a storm in the country's political life.

### ORISSA STATES

The Orissa States witnessed worse repression and misrule than probably any other group of states in India. Though the people of these states had everything in common with their neighbours in the Province of Orissa—a common culture, common social usages, religious thought and mode of living—yet they were cut up in several political jurisdictions which brought them under different administrations. These states presented a picture of feudalism at its worst. Like new converts\* the rulers of Orissa states vied with one another in leading a life of glamour and luxury, since they thought this to be the only attribute of princely life. As this meant high cost, they resorted to all round exploitation and indiscriminate taxation, which, in turn, roused the people against them.

The Orissa States People's Conference was founded in 1931. Its first session was held that very year. The rule of suppression and brutal force which followed prevented the people from holding another session during the next

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\*These Orissa territories were declared as states and created "non-British areas" only in 1882. Till then they were treated as Tributary Mahals and formed a part of British India.

few years. The second session could be held only in 1937. The Orissa States Enquiry Committee has the following to say about the happenings in these States in the twenties and the thirties:—

"If one examines the notable events in the humdrum existence of the people in these States for the past 25 years or so, one will be surprised to learn that in these years tracts governed by the Cheifs under the direct advice of the British Political Officers there have been several popular uprisings aimed at securing redress of some urgent economic and political grievances. People in Baud, Bamra, Rairakhol, Ranpur, Nayagarh, Nilgiri, Talcher and many other States have spontaneously risen several times against arbitrary enhancement of land rent, *bethi*, and other crying economic and political grievances. Severity of *bethi*, requisitioning of goats and buffaloes for sacrificial purposes, fees for killing wild beasts damaging the crops in the fields, grazing fees and increment of land rent are some of the prominent causes which have led to these risings."\*

With the Congress Ministry taking over reins of Government in 1937, the agitation in the Orissa States entered a new stage. Talcher and Dhenkanal led the way in repression. Out of a total population of 75,000 as many as 26,000 felt compelled to migrate from Talcher to British Orissa. Prof. Ranga who was asked to visit the Orissa States gave horrowing details of the sufferings of these refugees. His narrative was supported by Thakkar Bapa, who also visited the disturbed areas in response to the call of distress. Sufferings of the people were so wide-spread that relief operations were organised in several parts of the country. The Congress tried to send relief parties and the

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\*Pages 5 and 6.

Marwari Relief Society also did whatever was possible to help the refugees.

The worst happenings took place in another states of Orissa, called Ranpur. The people of Ranpur were greatly agitated against the tyrannies and exploitation of the Government. In spite of the repressive laws, they rose and demonstrated against official policies. One such demonstration was so much infuriated that the people attacked the residence of the Political Agent, Maj Buzalgette and murdered him. This let loose a veritable reign of terror upon the people of Orissa states. They were victimised and subjected to all manners of punishment and revengeful acts of tyranny.

Gandhiji in his characteristic way condemned the outburst of violence in Orissa states and asked the people to suspend satyagraha if they could not stick to non-violence. Commenting on Mahatma Gandhi's views expressed in the *Harizan* and his criticism of the people of Orissa states, a public worker of Orissa wrote to him a long clarificatory letter, which Gandhiji published in the *Harizan*. Among other things this letter said :—

"I have carefully re-read and read your views on the murder of the Political Agent of Orissa States. I was rather pained to find that you made no reference to the terrible atrocities committed on the poor State subjects of Orissa. Is not the murder of the Political Agent a divine warning to the States authorities to be more merciful in dealing with the people's fights? After all, between the State subjects and the Political Department, who deserves our sympathy more? If the mob was wrong in using violence against the Political Agent, was the latter justified in firing on the mob and thus provoking them to violence? And

what about the terrible repression for which the Political Agent was responsible? I agree with you that the murder of the Political Agent is unfortunate, but who is responsible for it? If the ruling Chiefs of Orissa had been properly advised and led by the Political Agent, and if he had not been party to the terrible repression, certainly the people would not have gone out of control."\*

It was probably the murder of the Political Agent in Ranpur and the preceding and subsequent disturbances in Orissa states which led the Political Department to think in terms of unifying the small states for purposes of administration. The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow was determined to evolve a workable plan of grouping. The result was the Cooperative Grouping system according to which the small states of Orissa, Western India and Simla hills were provided with joint administrations particularly in the departments of Police, Medical and Health, Judiciary, etc.

When political activity started again in 1945 after the end of the World War, the states of Nilgiri, Dhenkanal, Talcher, etc., revived the old agitation and reiterated their demand for some kind of responsive and responsible administration in the states. The Praja Mandals in the individual states and the Orissa States People's Conference had by now acquired so much popular backing that the Rulers did not consider it worthwhile to challenge them, or in any case to ride roughshod over their people's demands. That explains why the Rulers of Orissa and Chhatisgarh states had started thinking in terms of forming a union in June-July, 1947. On the 1st of August, the Eastern States Union was actually inaugurated and it started function-

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\*M.K. Gandhi—"The Indian States Problem", pp. 124—125.

ing from that date. Though the union had been formed it did not stop the agitation for responsible Governments in the various states. There were widespread disturbances particularly in Dhenkanal and Nilgiri. In Dhenkanal, the local Praja Mandal went to the extent of occupying all Government buildings and surrounding the palace. Similarly in Nilgiri, the Praja Mandal had decided to form a parallel Government, to occupy the villages and take over Government offices and property.

Happenings of this kind were a sufficient indication to the Rulers to appreciate the temper of the people and reassess their own position. When therefore the States Ministry breached the proposal of merger of these states with the adjoining provinces, there was hardly any opposition worth the name. When the Rulers were promised adequate privy purses, there was little doubt that most of them welcomed the Union Government's move, considering it to be the best way out of the trouble. Shortly afterwards the Orissa states were merged with the province of Orissa and the Chhatisgarh states with Madhya Pradesh.

### RAJPUTANA STATES

Soon after the first session of the All-India States' People's Conference in December 1927 a wave of awakening swept the slumbering states of Rajputana also. It was followed a few years later by the founding of Praja Parishads and Praja Mandals in various states like Jodhpur, Udaipur and Alwar. A region-wide political organisation of all the states of Rajputana was formed in 1934. These political organisations were rarely able to work in the open. They were suspect in the eyes of the state administrations and therefore held their meetings generally outside their respec-

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\* Towards the Integration of Indian States"—Dr Urmila Phadnis, p 129

tive states. The state administrations were so autocratic and oppressive that most of the prominent Praja Mandal workers were compelled to carry on their struggle in British Indian territory, which in this case was generally the British-ruled small province of Ajmer-Merwara. That is because the writ of the princes did not run there. They often issued statements criticising the states, but all of these were published in British Indian Press only. The states had no press as such and only such periodicals were allowed to appear there as toed the line of the state administrations.

In the pre-Gandhian era of Indian nationalism there was not much political awakening in Rajputana, although a branch of the Revolutionary Party was organised in Jaipur by Arjun Lal Sethi. Sethi is still looked upon as a pioneer in rousing national consciousness and political awakening among the youth of this region. After him came Kesri Singh Barhet of Shahpura. Not only he but his whole family played a leading role in the revolutionary activities of those days. Both Kesri Singh and his son, Pratap Singh suffered long terms of imprisonment and, in fact, the latter died in detention. Among others who made all-out sacrifices were Rao Gopal Singh of Kharwa and Damodar Dass Rathi of Beawar.

With the advent of Mahatama Gandhi on the Indian political scene and the organisation of the Congress as a popular organisation, Rajputana witnessed a horizontal growth of the political movement. As the ground was already prepared to some extent, quite a number of people from this region participated in the first non-cooperation movement of 1921. They joined in still larger numbers the later passive resistance movements of 1930-32 and 1942.

From the thirties may be said to have begun the popular movement for demanding administrative reforms and relief



in taxation. The Jagirdari system was prevalent in nearly all the states of India, but it was the most marked feature of the states of Rajputana. The result was that the people living in Jagir areas known as Thikanas were under the double yoke. It was against this system that the people combined and rose in revolt.

The first agrarian political agitation launched in a princely state of Rajputana was that of Bijolian in Udaipur. It was led by Vijay Singh Pathik, who was supported in his plans by Haribhau Upadhyaya, Manik Lal Verma, Jai Narain Vyas and Gokulbhai Bhatt, men who have since been the vanguard of Rajputana's freedom struggle. The cultivators of the area refused to pay indiscriminate cesses and taxes so that they were forced to launch a satyagraha. As this satyagraha was eventually crowned with success, it inspired the whole of Rajputana. People's grievances against feudal exploitation and curbs on civil liberties were now voiced in an organised manner. Only three years after Bijolian, that is, in 1921, the Kisans of Begun Thikana (Udaipur) also staged a successful satyagraha. Subsequently in Bundi, Sirohi, Jaipur, Jodhpur and other states Praja Mandal became more active. These mandals, working under the direction of the Rajputana Praja Mandal were affiliated to the All India States People's Conference after its formation in 1927-28.

As could have been expected, this agitation was followed by repression and police atrocities on political workers in jails and outside. A whole village of 350 houses in Alwar State was set on fire and about 100 people shot dead as a result of reprisals to political agitation. This happened in 1925, in Nimuchana village. To be effective the state forces opened machine gun fire on the agitators, which accounts for such a large number of casualties.

By this time Jai Narain Vyas had come into prominence and had succeeded in forming a nucleus of leaders from different states, who guided the political workers and directed the agitation. The martyrdom of Bal Mukund Bisa of Jodhpur, Sagar Mal Gopa of Jaisalmer and Ramesh Swami of Bharatpur served as fuel to the fires of discontent and subsequent agitations.

The burning of Nimuchana village and killing of 100 people there in 1925 led the Alwar Praja Mandal to agitate for liberalisation of the state administration. When after the ending of the war in 1945, the Alwar Praja Mandal began to agitate for full responsible government, the state government again came upon the agitators with a heavy hand. Many workers were arrested and police atrocities became a common occurrence. As a concession to the Praja Mandal workers the Maharaja made a declaration to include three popular ministers in the State Council, but the Praja Mandal did not accept the offer, since it wanted a full-fledged council and popular responsible government in which the Maharaja would be nothing more than a constitutional head. The agitation ended only with the merger of the state with Matsya Union in 1948.

An equally distressing link in this chain of cruelty occurred in the Sikar Thikana of Jaipur State. Here too the basis of agitation was agrarian. During the years preceding the last war, there was wide spread depression when agricultural prices touched an all-time low. This brought hardships on the kisans, particularly because the Thikanadar was keen to make up his own loss of income at the cost of the kisans. At this time of distress he hit on the brilliant idea of enhancing the land revenue, while on the other side of the border in British India kisans were being given remissions to the extent of 7 or 8 annas in a rupee. When all

petitions and requisitions failed the kisans started a peaceful agitation, and this brought on them the heavy hand of the Thikanadar and his employees. Several cases of murder, firing, lathi charge, looting and burning of property occurred at the time of realisation of excess revenue and recovering money in the name of fines. There were cases of externment of people who helped the kisans, molestation of women and of cattle-lifting. The Sikar happenings sent a wave of anger not only in the length and breadth of Rajputana but throughout the country. A moderately reasonable settlement could be reached only when as a result of Press criticism and pressure from the AISPC, the Maharaja of Jaipur was persuaded to move in the matter.

Agitation in other states of Rajputana followed more or less the same pattern. On account of excessive taxes and autocratic rule of the princes and the jagirdars, Praja Mandals which were formed in the thirties had started gaining strength after 1936. The formation of these Mandals provided a wider base to the agitation bringing political workers together and providing a direction to the agitation for civil liberties and administrative reforms. We shall, however, touch upon the salient happenings in the bigger states, which formed an integral part of the states People's struggle for freedom.

Let us first of all take Jaipur. Political awakening in this state dates back to the days of minority of the present Maharaja. The Praja Mandal was founded in 1931, but its first regular session could be held only in 1938 with the late Jamnalal Bajaj in the chair. That very year, the Praja Mandal launched a mass movement against the curbs on civil liberties of individuals and to demand responsible government under the aegis of the Maharaja. Jamnalal Bajaj, who entered the state in contravention of government's

prohibitory order, Hiralal Shastri and other leaders were arrested and detained. A few months later other Praja Mandal leaders, including Kapur Chand Patani, Chiranji Lal Misra, Harish Chandra Sharma and Gulab Chand Kasliwal were also arrested. The agitation had by now gripped the entire state.

As a result of Mahatma Gandhi's active intervention and country-wide criticism of the repressive measures adopted by the State Government, the Jaipur Durbar came to terms with the Praja Mandal and the satyagraha was withdrawn. Kisan agitations in Jagirs, however, continued particularly in Shekwati. Subsequently the Jaipur Legislative Council was formed. It consisted of 81 members, a majority of them elected. The Praja Mandal took part in the elections and captured a majority of seats.

In 1946 the Jaipur Legislative Council adopted a resolution asking for full responsible government. The first non-official Minister to be appointed in any state in Rajputana was sworn in as a member of the Jaipur Cabinet in 1946. It was in March 1948 that an interim government, fully responsible to the State Legislature, was installed in Jaipur.

The history of political awakening in Jodhpur is largely linked up with the career of Jai Narain Vyas who hailed from this state. The first semi-political organisation, the Marwad Sewa Sangh, was founded by him in 1920. Soon after the Marwadi Hitkarini Sabha was brought into being by him. The Marwad Lok Parishad was founded in 1928. It was this organisation which fought ceaselessly for the people's cause from 1940 to 45.

Jai Narain Vyas who was the prime mover against the autocracy of the Maharaja and the atrocities committed by

the jagirdars was extenuated from Jodhpur state and had to take up residence in Beawar in Ajmer province. From there he continued to direct the agitation. He founded several journals and newspapers for furthering the cause of the states people. In 1940 the State Government proceeded against Vyas for his seditious writings and speeches and arrested him. On a charge of conspiracy against the ruler he was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment and detained in a remote and far-flung fortress.

Police atrocities, particularly in jails, were the worst feature of the Jodhpur Government's repressive policy. It was as a result of these atrocities that Bal Mukund Bisa died in the state jail. As a result of pressure on the Political Department, and country-wide criticism of the State Government's action in the Indian Press, the Jodhpur Government relaxed a bit and released Jai Narain Vyas and other political workers. In an effort to meet the popular demand the State Government decided to take some action, but at the municipal level. The Jodhpur Municipal Committee was reorganised providing for popular election and the appointment of popular administrators. Vyas was now appointed as one of the administrators. But he got so much disgusted within a few months with official policies which continued to be as despotic as before that soon after he gave up this assignment and once again joined the ranks of political agitators.

The activities of the Lok Parishad workers were not confined to the state capital or towns alone. Certain jagirs where the Sirdars were head-strong and unresponsive to the just demands of the cultivators had also become hubs of political activity. The repression involving great sufferings which the kisans of Chandwal and Dabra suffered in 1942 and 1947 respectively will ever be remembered in the history of agrarian uprisings in Jodhpur state.

Udaipur, which had already been shaken by agrarian unrest in earlier years, came face to face with the popular demand for democratisation of the administration leading gradually to the establishment of responsible government. This demand was voiced by the Mewar Praja Mandal which was founded in 1938. The Mandal was immediately declared unlawful. After one year, when restrictions had been relaxed, the Mewar Praja Mandal received a dose of fresh vigour with a promising youth, Mohan Lal Sukhadia, joining it. Manik Lal Varma was the president of the Mandal. After leading a dormant life during the war years, the Mandal again got active in 1945 and came forward as the only political organisation of Mewar. On the issue of constitutional reform, there was lot of hedging and hesitancy on the part of the Mewar government, but, on the whole, its attitude compared favourably with that of other state governments in Rajputana. If on the one hand it was attributed to the constant vigilance of popular organisation by the Praja Mandal under the leadership of Verma and Sukhadia, it could also be said with equal truth that the attitude of the Maharana was throughout mild, if not sympathetic, to the popular demand. The glaring injustices and atrocities had become a thing of the past, the pre-1945 era.

In Bikaner the Praja Mandal was established rather late, in 1942, but political movement in the state had already raised its head ten years earlier. It was in 1932 that the state government arrested political workers, including Khub Ram Saraf, Satya Narain Saraf, Swami Gopal Das, Chandan Mal, Badri Prasad, Pyare Lal and Sohan Lal under the emergency provisions of the State Penal Code. These people had been critical of the princes' stand at the Round Table Conference and the Maharaja, on return from London, found it too much to allow his subjects to associate themselves with that criticism. These leaders had also publicly

supported the states people's case as put before the British public by the delegation sent by the AISPC to London. The repressive policy of the Bikaner state, however, far from curbing the agitation made it the concern of the whole of Rajputana

Seeing the situation deteriorating and the state government determined to pursue its policy of gagging public opinion, Jai Narain Vyas left for Bikaner early in 1933. He was then General Secretary of the AISPC and had just been released from the Ajmer Jail after completing his term of imprisonment. He addressed many public meetings in Bikaner and sent a memorandum on behalf of the state people to the Indian National Congress and the AISPC.

The demand for constitutional advance supported by political agitation did not leave the Harauti states of Bundi, Kotah and Jhalawat also untouched. The agitation in Udaipur in early forties directly influenced the political climate of these states. Public workers protested against the ban on their entry into Bhil villages. Their contact with these simple-minded cultivators was considered to be undesirable. But such a prohibitory order by itself was sufficient cause for action on the part of public workers. Praja Mandals of these three states decided to meet the caveat of the states authorities. They entered the Bhil areas despite the official ban and police atrocities. This was the beginning of awakening in this backward wooded region of Rajputana. Among the leaders of the popular movement were Brij Sunder Sharma, Gopal Lal Kotiya, Nityanand Nagar, Rishi Dutt Mehta, Indra Dutt 'Swadheen', Ramesh Soni, Kundan Lal Chopra, Prabhu Lal Vijay and Shrimati Mehta. They carried the message of the AISPC and the demand for responsible government to every nook and corner of the Harauti states.

49 per cent of the population in the Kashmir valley ; yet as a class they were have-nots in the truest sense of the term.

The bulk of the Muslim population were tillers, labourers and artisans—classes which were an excellent target of exploitation by the richer sections of the society which overwhelmingly consisted of non-Muslims.

For years the Muslims had not taken kindly to the modern type of education. The schools and colleges in the State, it would appear, were run largely for the benefit of the Hindus and other non-Muslim communities. Such of the Muslims as managed to pass from these institutions were unable to get suitable jobs.

Agrarian discontent and paucity of employment opportunities were thus the motivating force for the Muslim masses to agitate against the Dogra regime in Jammu & Kashmir. Slowly as the discontent among the Muslims spread, they started voicing their feelings and demanding a larger share in the services. The first shot was fired when a deputation of Muslims presented a memorial to the Viceroy, Lord Reading on his visit to Srinagar in 1924. In the course of the memorial the Muslims demanded that proprietary rights of the land should be given to the peasants, that an adequate number of Mohammedans should be employed in the State services, that steps should be taken to improve the conditions of Mohammedan education in the State, that the system of Begar should be abolished, that the work of the Co-operative Department should be extended and that all Muslim mosques in possession of the Government should be released and handed over to the Muslims.\* The State Government had the memorial examined by a committee of officials who reported that there was no substance in it. The memorial therefore brought nothing to the Muslims,

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\*Prem Nath Bazaz, *History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, page 138,



but it certainly gave a fillip to their movement to put forth their demands in an organised manner

The process of presentation of demands and their half-hearted consideration by the Government continued for some years, without anything tangible coming out of it. It was in 1930 that a new organisation called the Reading Room Party was formed by a few Muslim graduates for discussing the problems of the Muslim masses. Among those graduates was also Sheik Mohammed Abdulla. The Reading Room Party began organising meetings, at which speeches were made expressing the hardships and distressing conditions of the people of the state. The State Government evidently did not take this group of young men seriously and thought of roping them in by offering them Government jobs, but it did not meet with much success. Abdulla who was appointed a teacher left his job after a few months and in collaboration with his friends founded the Muslim Conference of which he himself became the President

The movement had by now started reverberating in British India, particularly in the adjoining Muslim-majority Province of Punjab. In Lahore, Sir Mohammed Iqbal, himself a Kashmiri, took up the cause of Kashmiris and set up the Kashmir Committee to help the Muslim masses of Kashmir in their struggle

Sheik Mohammed Abdulla had thus started his political career as a champion of the Muslim cause, but no fair minded person would dub him a communalist for that reason. He could hardly be blamed if an overwhelming majority of the people in Kashmir were Muslims and if it were they who were the main victims of the Dogra oligarchy. It must be said to Abdulla's credit that only after the establishment of the Muslim Conference he realised that the real fight was not between the two religious communities but between the haves and have-nots, the oppressed and the oppressors. He

started giving vent to his thoughts in favour of broadbasing the Muslim Conference from the very beginning. In 1935 he made an appeal to the people of Kashmir belonging to all communities "to rise above petty communal bickerings and work jointly for the welfare of the masses." He further declared: "my fight is for the emancipation of the country."

Sheik Abdulla's nationalist outlook and his fight for the entire State's freedom endeared him to the masses. As his prestige and popularity grew, so did the popularity of the Muslim Conference, which, though by nomenclature a communal organisation, could well be equated with any national body fighting for a country's liberation and for people's fundamental rights. The Muslim Conference had adopted an agitational approach. There was a lot of excitement and tension as a result of its activities. In June 1931 it led to communal riots in Srinagar. Being the main target of attack, the Hindu community suffered heavily. The State Government arrested 300 people, including Abdulla. This may well be said to be the first upsurge of political awakening, in Kashmir though on communal lines. The repression however did not achieve anything. Relations between the two communities on the one hand and between the people and the State Government on the other continued to deteriorate.

In July 1931, there was a massive demonstration against the State Government and the Maharaja. The Muslim demonstrators had gathered outside the prison walls wherein a Muslim fanatic's trial was taking place. The crowd forced its entry into the jail provoking the police to open fire. As a result of this incident, 21 people were reported to be killed by bullets.\*

Historians of the freedom struggle in Kashmir consider

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\*This day, 13th July is still celebrated throughout Kashmir every year as "Martyrs' Day."

this day as the beginning of the struggle for independence and freedom in the modern sense. In his monumental book "Struggle for Freedom In Kashmir", P N Bazaz says "Doubtless in 1931 the struggle was aggressively communal outwardly, but those who have not shut their eyes could see that it was in essence the struggle of victimised and enslaved people against the despotic rule. It was sooner or later bound to proceed on the right track."

Another feature of this upsurge in Kashmir was that it attracted Muslim organisations in the Punjab. The Ahrars and other Muslim organisations in Punjab celebrated Kashmir Day in August the same year and supported the demands of the Kashmiri people more vociferously than the Kashmiris themselves. The Ahrars and others started sending jathas of volunteers into Jammu and Kashmir in order to demonstrate their sympathy for the Muslim masses.

Thus, while everything seems to be conspiring to give the Kashmir struggle for freedom a communal hue, it must be said to the credit of the Muslim leaders of this movement and also the Kashmir Hindus particularly the Pandits, that they saw the right side of the picture and decided to support the Muslim Conference movement. The foremost Hindu who came out in support of the ideals of the Conference was Prem Nath Bazaz. Convinced as he was that the first thing to be done in Kashmir was to secularise the State politics, he started in October 1932 a daily paper, called *Vitasta*. Its object was to "popularise the ideal of secular politics and fight for the establishment of responsible government in the State." Bazaz and a few other Hindus of his way of thinking were welcomed by Abdulla and other Muslim Conference leaders. Prominent among other non-Hindus who joined the movement were Jialal Kilam and Budh Singh. It led to joint

consultation for the achievement of a common objective. Abdulla and Bazaz jointly started another weekly journal, the *Hamdard*, to popularise the ideology and "to lay the foundation of nationalism in the State." "The *Hamdard* attempted to blaze a new trail in the affairs of the State. It was a standard bearer of democracy and unity of all Kashmiris without any consideration for caste and creed."\*

All these activities went to lay the foundation of secular politics in Jammu & Kashmir state. In May 1936, the Muslim Conference Party observed Responsible Government Day throughout the State. Abdulla made an appeal to non-Muslims to participate in the function and his appeal elicited remarkable response from non-Muslims of the State. Soon after another Party was formed called the Kashmir Youth League under the guidance of P.N. Bazaz. This Party believed "in the equality of all people in the State and held that there was no distinction between young men and women on the basis of religious beliefs and faiths."

Having been convinced that the party which fought the State Government and worked for the establishment of responsible government should be non-communal so that all progressive forces in the State could rally round it, Sheikh Abdulla moved the following resolution in the Working Committee of the Muslim Conference in June 1938 :— "Whereas in the opinion of the Working Committee the time has now come when all the progressive forces in the country should be rallied under one banner to fight for the achievement of responsible government, the Working Committee recommends to the General Council that in the forthcoming session of the Conference the name and constitution of the organization be so altered and amended that all such people who desire to participate in this political struggle may easily

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\*Ibid page 167.

Dewan of Kashmir Gopalaswami Iyengar acted cleverly in encouraging Abdulla to plunge headlong in the Congress ideology. This episode of Nehru's visit to the valley, he adds, killed Abdulla, the revolutionery, the fighter for freedom \*

The coming events made Abdulla and the National Conference commit themselves more and more to the Congress. Those who did not agree with him came out openly in support of the Muslim League in the context of India and the Muslim Conference in the internal affairs of Kashmir. The cleavage was clear and sharp

Just at the time when Sheikh Abdulla was to decide whether he should align himself with the Congress or the Muslim League and when these two principal Indian political parties were competing for winning over the National Conference, events were happening in a sequence which loaded the dice heavily in favour of the Congress. The final choice may be said to have been made during the visit of Jawaharlal Nehru and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, though even earlier Abdulla's close association with Congress leaders during the AISPC meets had made his choice almost a foregone conclusion

When in August 1942, the Congress launched the "Quit India" movement, the Kashmir leaders not only endorsed it but the Working Committee of the National Conference adopted an official resolution supporting the "Quit India" movement. To enforce this decision, 23rd August 1942 was celebrated throughout Kashmir as the National Day when meetings were held and resolutions adopted in support of the above movement. Next month the president of the National Conference, Sardar Budh Singh addressed a letter to the Viceroy in which full support was expressed for the Congress stand and a demand was made for the release of Congress

leaders and the declaration of India's independence. The demand for release of Congress leaders was repeated in April 1943 at the Annual Session of the National Conference held at Mirpur.

In June 1944 Jinnah visited the Kashmir valley. Contrary to his declaration that he was visiting Kashmir for health reasons and not to influence the politics of the state, Jinnah lost no time in coming out with his plans to wean the National Conference leaders from the Congress and to try to bring them into the Muslim League fold. He was given a number of receptions by public leaders, including Sheikh Abdulla and others of the National Conference, and there were many exchanges of views between them and Jinnah, yet the outcome was disappointing for the Muslim League leader. Sheikh Abdulla's statement on the eve of Jinnah's departure made it further clear that Jinnah's mission in Kashmir was a unmitigated failure.

Jawaharlal Nehru, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and Maulana Azad were present by special invitation at the Sopore Session of the National Conference in August 1945. Abdulla in his presidential address spelt out the programme of building up "New Kashmir." He declared that "the future and independence of Jammu & Kashmir state were inextricably linked with the future and independence of India.

The last phase of popular resistance against the state government in Kashmir was the agitation started by the National Conference in May 1946. The slogan of the agitators, "Quit Kashmir", was obviously aimed at the Dogra Ruler and his government. Abdulla, the leader of this movement and his colleagues were arrested after a few days of the starting of the agitation. The Indian National Congress fully supported the National Conference in their agitation. To demonstrate his sympathy with the agitation,

Jawaharlal Nehru, while he was the Vice-President of the Viceroy's Executive Council, left for Kashmir, but the state government banned his entry in Jammu and Kashmir. In defiance of the ban Nehru tried to enter the state, but was arrested at Kohala. It was only after the Viceroy's intervention that the ban was lifted and Nehru was able to enter Kashmir. His visit was followed by the visits of other Indian leaders like Aruna Asaf Ali, Acharya Kripalani, and Jay Prakash Narain. Last of all came Mahatma Gandhi himself. As the agitation gained momentum, Kashmir Government's policy of repression also grew. The Prime Minister of Kashmir at that time was Ram Chandra Kak. His policies were so unpopular that the whole governmental machinery responsible for the repression came to be nicknamed as 'Kakistocracy'.

Sheikh Abdulla and his colleagues were released only in the last week of October 1947 when the raiders from across the border had threatened the security of Kashmir and the Maharaja and his government were compelled to look to India for help against the raiders.

### Deccan States

Except for Kolhapur, all the Deccan states were classed as small states. In matters of administration and civil liberties, there was not much to choose between them and other groups of states. It was largely after the Congress had taken office in Bombay and Madras in 1937 that the people of these states, particularly of Ramdurg, Sangli, Miraj and Jamkhandi began to organise public opinion in favour of demanding relief from heavy taxation and democratisation of the administration.

Some of the early public workers who participated in the discussions and confabulations in Poona that led ultimately to the establishment of A. I. S. P. C. hailed from these states. Since Poona was the unofficial headquarters of the

states people because of the interest that the Servants of India Society took in their affairs, both the people and the rulers of Deccan states were aware of the nature of the problems of the state's. Praja Mandals were founded in these states earlier than in any other group of states. All these Praja Mandals worked under the guidance of the Deccan States People's Conference founded in early thirties. This conference held a meeting of representatives from all states in 1937.

It is somewhat surprising that, unlike other states, there were not many headlong clashes in this region between the Praja Mandal workers and the Durbars. The only exceptions were Ramdurg, Jamkhandi and Miraj.

In Miraj, a campaign of satyagraha was set on foot against the state's agrarian policy and the lack of civil liberties there. In this satyagraha the local Praja Mandal was supported by N. C. Kelkar and some members of the Servants of India Society who took part in the agitation in order to assert the rights of the people. The non-violent satyagraha was successful in the sense that the state government were forced to review its policy of repression and meet the principal demands of the people about their economic and political rights.

In Ramdurg and Jamkhandi also the resistance movements met with considerable success, though in the case of the former there were reports of violence on the part of the satyagrahis. R. R. Diwakar, Yalgi and Hardikar visited Ramdurg to report the incident in detail to Gandhiji.\* Mahatma

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\* Yalgi, on whose advice the Ramdurg Sansthan Praja Sangh had been established, visited Ramdurg in April, 1938. On behalf of the Sangh people's demands were formulated and submitted to the ruler. Next month, in May, 1938 a Conference of the Deccan States people took place at Sangli under the presidentship of Sardar Patel. After detailed discussions at the Conference Shankarrao Deo was asked to settle the differences between the people of Ramdurg and the ruler,



Gandhi felt unhappy at the violent turn that the events had taken and warned the workers of the Praja Sangh and Congressmen in general against departing from the policy of non violence. He asked the Karnataka Provincial Congress Committee to hold an impartial enquiry into the events

The outcome of satyagraha was not untoward in the case of Jamkhandi, though the people here were able to have some of their demands met by the ruler and his government

With the dawn of 1945, began a new chapter in the history of these states There were certain good precedents here which luckily proved infectious The Raja of Aundh had granted responsible government in 1939 and the affairs of that state had been smooth and satisfactory since then The Raja of Phaltan for some time past had become a convert to the creed of nationalism and since then he had lost no opportunity to demonstrate his love of democracy and patriotic fervour \*

These incidents and the general awakening had created a conciliatory atmosphere in the Deccan states The rulers of these states had started mootng the question of forming a union of their states right in the beinging of 1946 They met at Poona and asked for Gandhiji's blessings but the Mahatma did not encourage the idea and asked them to contact other Congress leaders Eventually, the union was formed, but out of 17 states, only 8 had joined it

Just at this time, the Raja of Jamkhandi announced his willingness to merge his state with Bombay Province if the people so wished The people enthusiastically opted for merger, and this turned the tide of events in the Deccan states All the Praja Mandals and their workers voiced their

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\* After the eventual merger of Phaltan in Bombay this ruler became a minister in Bombay Government

preference for merger with Bombay. This dealt a deadly blow to the newly formed union, which had to be dissolved. All the Deccan states were thereafter merged with Bombay.

## MYSORE

Mysore truly enjoyed the reputation of being the best administered and most progressive state in India. The fact is that in the matter of representative institutions and constitutional progress it compared favourably even with the provinces, but only upto 1920 till the time the Montague-Chelmsford reforms had not been introduced. The Mysore State was blessed with a Representative Legislative Assembly way back in 1881, just before or about the time the Local Self-Government Act was put on the statute book in British India. The Assembly was twice expanded and the Maharaja had declared his policy to be of "associating increasingly the people with the administration of the State."

For nearly half a century all seemed to be quiet and peaceful. As the pace of Constitutional development in India as a whole accelerated, during and after the Round-table Conferences, public leaders in Mysore to think in terms of responsible government in the state. It was, therefore, a rude shock for them when in June, 1934 they were told by the Dewan in one of his speeches to the Representative Assembly that he had no intention of taking the constitutional development to its natural conclusion. His actual words were, "Let me tell the House that there is no idea of introducing further changes in the Constitution or of altering the structure of Mysore Government. I cannot help expressing my surprise that this policy should have been advocated at a time when Parliamentary Democracy is decaying everywhere,"

This statement provoked much thinking and more criticism. When Congress Ministries came into power in 1937 in Bombay and Madras, the thinking of the people of Mysore threatened to blossom into action. Establishment of responsible governments in neighbouring provinces had kindled similar aspirations in the hearts of the people of Mysore state. *The tide had turned and the Mysore State Congress decided to challenge the three-year old statement of the Dewan.*

Quite a few political parties had been in existence in Mosore. There was, for example the Praja Mitra Mandal started in 1917 by the well-known leader of the state, BHASYAM. The policy of the party is summed up in its two slogans: "Equal opportunities to all" and "Justice to everyone and injustice to none". In 1930 a new party named the People's Party was ushered into existence with the object of attainment of responsible government under the aegis of the Maharaja. Then there was the Mysore Congress which devoted itself largely to constructive programmes and organisational work in the state.

There was good deal of hesitancy leading to quibbling on the part of the Mysore Government to accept in clear words the demand for responsible government. The Dewan and other officials tried to delude the people by coining the term "responsive government" and peddling it as the real desideratum. But it hardly caused any confusion. The people of Mysore were politically wide awake. They always responded to the call of the Congress. They not only went to participate in the struggle for freedom in Karnataka outside Mysore state, "but also afforded to the people of other princely states an example of fighting for democratic institutions in order to bring the Government on a level with the Government in British India"\*

\* History of freedom Movement in Karnataka"—Halappa Page 105

This had been the conviction of the people since 1930 when the State People's Conference and the Mysore Youth Conference (both held at Bangalore) had stressed the need to introduce democratic institutions leading ultimately to the establishment of responsible government in the state.

There was another important factor which brought nearer to each other the Mysore state people and other Kannada-speaking people in Bombay and Madras provinces. This was the movement for the unification of Karnataka. The Karnataka Unification Sangh was formed in 1924. It forged an unbreakable link between the various administrative units inhabited by Kannada-speaking people. That the Sangh during its early years harboured considerable good will for the Mysore ruling house is evident from the enthusiasm with which the Silver Jubilee of the Maharaja of Mysore was celebrated in 1927 throughout the Kannada-speaking areas as a part of the unification movement.

Further fillip was given to this movement by the six hundredth anniversary celebrations of the Vijayanagar Empire organised at Hampi in 1936.

These developments, in themselves cultural and historical on surface, brought the Kannada-speaking people together, eventually forging a common political forum for them. The Congress provided that universally accepted forum. Future events in Mysore state would serve to illustrate this point.

"Halappa sums up to position as it was in 1937-38 in these words :

"With the ushering in of Congress Ministries in the Provinces the political climate in the States was bound to change. The people fighting their battles in the States felt

that they could count on active aid from the Congress in British India. Circumstances also combined to bring about a change in the attitude of the Congress towards the popular struggle. The thumping victories gained by the Congress in the Provincial elections had their effect on the people of the States. Some of the leftist Congress leaders in British India thought that Congress must give active help to the people of the States in realising their political aspirations. Pressure was brought to bear on the Congress to adopt an active policy towards the States. Happenings in the States would no longer be viewed in silence by the Congress. The repressive policy adopted by the Government of Mysore towards the Congress in the State was denounced by the Indian National Congress\*\*

The Praja Mitra Mandal and the People's Party in keeping with the current trends, combined to form a new organisation known as People's Federation. The new party's object was to secure political rights and justice to backward communities. This fusion took place in 1934. The leaders of the People's Federation soon began to realise that in order to secure effective power from the state for the people it would be necessary to bring about a further merger of the two outstanding parties, i.e. the Congress and the People's Federation. This amalgamation took place in 1937\*\* This development completed the evolution

\* Ibid page 466

\*\* This is the resolution which the Federation adopted at its conference held on October 16, 1937 at Bangalore.

Whereas it is essential that both British India and the Indian states should function through an all India organisation as India is one and indivisible and the principle of federation is universally accepted and whereas the Indian National Congress is an organisation the programme of which is one very much identical with that of the Mysore People's Federation and whereas it is therefore found inexpedient and undesirable to continue to keep alive the Mysore People's Federation as a separate organisation this Conference ratifies the action of the Executive Committee and resolves that the Mysore People's Federation do merge itself into the Congress,

of political parties in Mysore. It was interpreted as the triumph of nationalism. The people looked upon this as merger of all the parties into the Congress.

Having thus emerged as the principal political party in the state, the Congress could not but think in terms of a concrete programme for the achievement of responsible government, particularly after the formation of Congress Ministries in the neighbouring provinces of Madras and Bombay with the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy.

Though it was only natural that the people of Mysore should have aspired for the establishment of a responsible government in the state, yet this development was by no means sudden. It had a certain background. Purposeful discussions of constitutional reforms with the ultimate object of the attainment of responsible government in Mysore may be traced back to 1933 when an All Parties' Conference was held for this purpose. It was the proceedings of this Conference and the demonstration of popular enthusiasm for responsible government which seems to have provoked the Dewan in 1934 to stiffen the Government's attitude and make the statement to which reference has been made earlier. Apparently the Dewan's attitude was an indication of the Government's intentions which later events went to confirm further.

In 1935 parts of rural Mysore were in the grip of economic difficulties, with the result that the kisans began to agitate for an overhaul of the revenue policy of the state. The kisan conferences organised by the People's Federation were banned by the government. The result was that none of the proposed conferences could be held and the kisans were denied access to authorities to ask for relief in their distress,

In January 1937 the Mysore State Congress was keen to inaugurate its election campaign with renewed zeal and fanfare. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya was invited to visit the state in this connection, but her entry was banned. Among the local leaders Bhaishyam and Karmarkar were similarly prevented from participating in the inaugural function. The Mysore State Congress was banned and declared an illegal organisation. There was now no doubt left that the government had decided to resort to repression in order to curb the popular movement. It was followed by wholesale ban of public meetings in various parts of the state.

In connection with the Independence Day, January 26, orders were issued prohibiting the hoisting of national flag in public places. Notices under Section 144 were served on public leaders like Siddalingiah, Hardikar, Masani and others preventing them from speaking at any public meeting. All public meetings and processions were prohibited under the Mysore Police Regulations for six months without license in Bangalore city. The Legislative Council and the Assembly, it would appear, were the most suitable forum to seek a constitutional remedy, but that was denied because of adjournment motions regarding denial of civil liberties having been summarily rejected.

As if prohibitory orders and prosecution of public men were not enough, an effort was made to gag the Press as a whole. A popular Kannada paper "Janavani" was forced to suspend publication.

All section of educated people in Mysore State came under the influence of the State Congress movement. Many of them made sacrifices voluntarily. A large number of lawyers gave up their practice and joined the movement. They courted imprisonment and faced trials. Not a few of

them were deprived of their sanads so that they were debarred from practising law. Foremost among such patriots were S. Nijalingappa, H. Siddayya, H. C. Dasappa, K. T. Bhashyan Ayyangar, B. N. Munavalli, T. Siddalingayah, T. Subramanya and Pattabhiraman. Most of these patriots had to suffer pangs of poverty on being deprived of their means of livelihood.

For a time the Mysore State Congress remained on the defensive. Towards the end of 1937, there was a noticeable change in its attitude and it appointed a Council of Action to take necessary measures to promote the fundamental rights of the people. Nearly all the Congress members of the Legislative Council resigned their seats as a protest against Government's policy of repression. The district Congress committees, the Municipalities of Mysore and Bangalore, the Bar Associations of Mysore, Shimoga and Tumkur and various other associations and organisations protested strongly against its repressive policy and adopted resolutions to this effect. But the Government refused to see the light of reason or the signs of the time.

At long last the bubble was pricked in January 1938. The State Congress decided to celebrate 26th January as Independence Day throughout the state. The main item in the programme was hoisting of the national flag (the flag of the Indian National Congress) in various places. The Government lost to time in placing a ban on these activities. Though the Independence Day passed off without any incident, the popular zeal to defy the ban went on gaining strength. In April 1938 at a village called Vidurashvatham, where many thousand people had gathered partly in response to the Congress call to hoist the national flag and partly as pilgrims as Vidurashvatham happens to be a centre of pilgrimage, the police subjected the crowds to



severe lathi-charge on the plea that that they had defied the ban on public meetings. The lathi-charge was followed by firing as a result of which 32 persons were killed and 38 seriously injured\*

This incident was serious enough to attract country-wide attention. The Mysore Government appointed an Inquiry Committee to report on the incident. Mahatma Gandhi sent Sardar Patel and Kripalani to Bangalore to study the situation and then report to him. These two leaders met the Maharaja and Dewan, the Sir Mirza I-mail and were able to settle the dispute between the State Government and the Congress. The terms of the settlement, which was widely hailed, were —

1. Recognition to be given to the Mysore State Congress
2. The existing Reforms Committee to discuss and to recommend a scheme of responsible government.
3. The Mysore State flag and the Congress flag to be flown together on all public occasions. At State Congress meetings it would be permissible to fly only the Congress flag.
4. The Congress to call off the flag satyagraha and all other civil disobedience activities. The Government on its part agreed to release all political prisoners and withdraw all prohibitory orders issued against the Mysore State Congress.

This settlement worked well for a time, but only for a time. The eyes of the people were fixed on the outcome

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\*According to official reports issued after the incident the estimate of killed and injured was ten and 40 respectively.

of the Reforms Committee. As its report was delayed, their patience soon wore off. It seems the State Government too was anxious to reassert its authority and to rectify the impression as if it had been cowed down by the State Congress satyagraha. So, political activity in various places continued, providing the Government the opportunity it was looking for. Quite a number of political workers were still in prison as 1939 ended. A few more had been added to their numbers. There were allegations of ill-treatment of satyagrahi prisoners. The State Government was obliged to enquire into them. Justice Nageshvara Iyer was appointed to conduct the inquiry. As Justice Iyer was a judge of the Mysore High Court, whereas the Congress wanted an outsider to look into their allegations, the State Congress abstained from participating in the inquiry. The report which Justice Iyer submitted to the Government was not accepted by the Congress, and this provided fresh ground for agitation.

This brings us to the close of 1940, a time when the European war had got into proper strides relegating demands for constitutional reforms into the background.

The next phase in Mysore affairs begins with the starting of the "Quit India" movement by the Congress in August 1942. The part which the people of Mysore played in this movement was more than any other princely state did. There were spontaneous demonstrations, risings and upheavals throughout the state soon after the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi and other senior Congress leaders. Many of the educational institutions and industrial establishments were either completely paralysed or their working seriously affected. Seventeen industrial concerns came to a standstill because of the workers going on strike for 2 weeks as a protest against the arrest of their leaders. As a result of

widespread disturbances, means of communications, including Posts and Telegraphs, were disrupted. The Government came out with all the curbs and repressive measures in its armoury. Editors of four daily news papers of Bangalore were arrested and the publication of papers suspended. Scores of workers were dismissed. The total number of arrests went beyond 2000. As a result of the disturbances over a 100 persons were killed in clashes or police firings. Right up till the end of September conditions in many parts of the state were abnormal.

The most famous, actually the "blood soaked," incident took place in the village of Isoor in Shimoga district. The people of this area had gone wild with enthusiasm and patriotic fervour. The village people gathered on September 26 and after arresting all the village functionaries declared their village independent. They set up a parallel government. This government could remain in office only for 2 days. On the 28th September, a large police force arrived from the district headquarters. The people welcomed it with excited shouts and slogans. This was followed by repeated lathi charges. Soon after came heavy firings by the Mysore Military forces. "For a fortnight a reign of terror was let loose on the village whose only crime was that it fought for the country's freedom. The guilty and the innocent were arrested indiscriminately. The police did as they pleased. There were regular looting by the very persons who were supposed to maintain order and peace.'\*

In these atrocities many people were killed and not less than a 100 arrested. Good many of these were prosecuted on charges of murder and arson. Subsequently five of the village leaders were sentenced to death and hanged.

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\*Ibid, Page 331

Signs of reconciliation between the people and the Mysore Government could be seen only in 1946 when, according to a revised constitution, responsible ministers were appointed in the Government. Some of the departments were still treated as reserved. It was only in the following year that a Government fully responsible to the Legislative Assembly was established. This Government was headed by a representative of the Mysore State Congress, K. C. Reddy, who became Mysore's first Chief Minister.

### PUNJAB STATES

In the matter of backwardness and denial of civil liberties, the Punjab states of Patiala, Jind, Nabha, Faridkot, Kapurthala and Malerkotla may well be said to deserve the palm. Generally speaking, all the states were backward in this respect but even so the Punjab states were among the foremost of them. In Patiala a popular opposition to certain prohibitory laws had been voiced on occasions but no resistance movement could be organised, for the simple reason that the state administration was too ruthless to permit anything of this kind.\* The Praja Mandal workers of Patiala in their despair wrote to Mahatma Gandhi for help. Their letter and thereafter Gandhi's correspondence with Maharaja of Patiala were subsequently published in the *Harijan*.

The main grievance of the people was the promulgation of a new law known as Hidayat of 1938 which curtailed the civil liberties of the people almost to the minimum. According to this law no propaganda of any kind could be carried on by the Praja Mandal workers. Many workers were arrested in connection with the agitation against this

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\*Leaders of Punjab states people often used to compare the conditions prevailing in the states with those which obtained in the Punjab. None disagreed with the view that while satyagraha in the Punjab meant public honour and everything short of red carpet, treatment in the Punjab states it invariably meant unpredictable hardship with some beating and foul abuses thrown in.

Hidayat The treatment meted out to them in jail was extremely severe and even cruel. Apart from this, the same state. This was the movement had started within the year, in 1939, another agitation of the tenants against the landlords

Some of the Praja Mandal workers had an interview with the Maharaja in August 1939. In the course of his talk, this is what the Maharaja told the deputationists :

"My ancestors have won the state by the sword and I mean to keep it by the sword. I do not recognize any organization to represent my people or to speak on their behalf. I am their sole and only representative. No organization such as Praja Mandal can be allowed to exist within the state. If you want to do Congress work, get out of the state. The Congress can terrify the British Government but if it ever tries to interfere in my state it will find me a terrible resister. I cannot tolerate any flag other than my own to be flown within my boundaries. You stop your Praja Mandal activities, otherwise I shall resort to such repression that your generations to come will not forget it. When I see some of my dear subjects drifting away into another fold it touches the very core of my heart. I advise you to get out of the Mandal and stop all kind of agitation; or else, remember, I am a military man; my talk is blunt and my bullet straight."\*

Such was the the stuff people of Patiala were up

state had organised resistance against certain objectionable practices indulged in by the landlords. A number of kisans and Praja Mandal workers were arrested for participating in the agitation. One of the workers, Seva Singh Thikriwala\* imprisoned in that connection never came out of the jail. He was reported to have succumbed to the third degree methods practised on him by the police. The Riyasati Praja Mandal headed by Brish Bhan could never function openly. Most of the time it had to function as an unlawful body and bear the brunt of the state government's witch-hunt.

About the smaller states of Nabha, Jind and Faridkot, the less said the better. In all these states throughout the thirties there were signs of discontent among the people against the denial of civil liberties and among the kisans against the avarice of the landlords who had the backing of the state governments. Now and then there were subdued demonstrations which were suppressed with ten times the force actually required. In these circumstances no organised resistance of any kind was possible.

A first-hand account of conditions obtaining in states in the twenties has come down to us from Jawaharlal Nehru's experience of trial and detention in the Nabha jail. In contravention of the orders of the state government, he entered the state territory whereupon he was arrested and tried for conspiracy. He was handcuffed and kept in the lock-up. About his two weeks experience in the lock-up

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\*Seva Singh Thikriwala was the president of the Riyasati Praja Mandal. He had presided over Punjab States People's Conference held at Ludhiana in 1930. He was soon after arrested by Patiala government, but released in 1931 as a result of agitation in the Punjab. In 1933 he was again arrested and sentenced to six years rigorous imprisonment. In the jail the treatment meted out to him was inhuman and extremely cruel. In 1934 he went on hunger strike in jail and died there in circumstances which have given rise to a number of inferences. "Indictment of Patiala", pages 19—20.

and the jail and his trial in a so-called court, Jawaharlal says

"Two or three days later we were taken to court for our case, and the most extraordinary and Gilbertian proceedings went on there from day to day. The Magistrate or Judge seemed to be wholly uneducated. He knew no English of course, but I doubt if he knew how to write the court language Urdu"

The written petitions which Nehru submitted to the court were not looked into and Jawaharlal was not allowed to engage a lawyer from outside. But he took all this in good humour, and after referring to the incident in his *Autobiography*, says

"Most of the Indian states are well known for their backwardness and their semifeudal condition, their personal autocracies, devoid even of competence or benevolence. Many a strange thing occurs there which never receives publicity. And yet their very inefficiency lessens the evil in some ways and lightens the burden on their unhappy people. For this is reflected in a weak executive, and it results in making even tyranny and injustice inefficient. It is not making tyranny more bearable, but it does make it less far reaching and widespread."\*

In Loharu a small state bordering on Rajasthan but included in the Punjab state, Praja Mandal workers had decided to resist certain taxes imposed by the state government. One of these taxes was known as 'Camel tax', anyone who possessed or used a camel was required to pay a tax. The Praja Mandal workers demonstrated against this tax. The state government opened fire on the demonstrators killing 20 people on the spot. This

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\*Jawaharlal Nehru. An autobiography page 113

happened in 1935. Largely as a result of the criticism of the state government by the AISPC some of these taxes were eventually withdrawn.

Agrarian unrest manifested itself in the shape of popular agitation in Jind and Kapurthala states as well. Actually in Jind the feeling of discontent was more widespread because of the unpopularity of the Chief Minister, Bihari Lal Dhingra and the utter incapacity and indifference of the ruler of the state. An agitation which might well have remained confined to rural areas in 1936-37, engulfed the urban population as well, thanks to the perverted sense of equality of the Chief Minister. The Jind cultivator, like the cultivator in most of the princely states, was the victim of exploitation at the hands of the land-owners or the Jagirdars. The worst sufferers were the kisans of Dadri, a district of Jind state bordering on Rajasthan. The state administration paid scant attention to their grievances. Its only response to their persistent demand for relief was, whether by design or accident, to enhance the incidence of taxation on city dwellers as well.

This widespread feeling of discontent provided a good enough handle to the State Praja Mandal to organise public opinion in favour of reforms in the administration. The Mandal's foremost demand was the removal of the Chief Minister. When petitions to the ruler failed, they approached the Political Department. As they got no redress from any quarter, they resorted to agitation and demonstrations. The state government replied with repression resulting in the use of force against demonstrators and indiscriminate arrests of Praja Mandal leaders. The Punjab Riyasati Praja Mandal also took up the cause of the Jind people, but the net out-come was only occasional promises of reforms which never came, and the release of some of the Praja Mandal workers.



In the case of Kapurthala also the cause of discontent was the state's agrarian policy which favoured the land-owning class more than the tiller of the soil. The worst affected area in the state was the tehsil of Sultanpur where the peasants rose in revolt in 1938. The Maharaja who had just returned from his yearly foreign trip set up an inquiry committee to look into the grievances. The demands of the Sultanpur peasants were met but only half-way, which was a shade better than the happenings in other Punjab states. The Kapurthala State Praja Mandal was more active than the Mandal of any other state in Punjab and it was largely as a result of its efforts that the Maharaja set up an Assembly, though less than half of its members were returned through elections.

Nabha which from 1923 to 1937 was under the direct administration of the Political Department for well nigh 15 years, fared no better than the other states. There was not a single representative institution in the state till 1935, no municipal committee, no district board. In respect of intolerance of any political activity, this state was ahead of all other sister states in Punjab. The Administrator was literally more loyal than the king and did not allow the Praja Mandal to function at all. The least sign of agitation was treated as revolt against the government and the agitators put behind bars. The leaders of the Nabha Praja Mandal, Sant Ram and others, suffered imprisonment several times.

Nabha had also a sub-division in the heart of Rajasthan, called Ateli. Though Ateli had a prosperous Mandi (Market), yet the peasants were miserably poor and backward. Cut off from the main part of the state, they were subjected to exploitation not only by the officials but also by the richer classes from the Nabha area. The people of Ateli made a few organised efforts for their representation in

the state services and improvement in the administration. These efforts on some occasions led to agitation and non-cooperation. On one occasion it resulted in a strike by the people and a no-rent campaign by the tillers of the soil.

### Punjab Hill States

The hill states of Punjab, generally known as the Simla Hill states were a jumble of assorted territories, ranging in area from 20 square miles to 3000 square miles. Lack of communications and mountainous fastnesses had kept them isolated from the main-stream of life for centuries. It is ironical that the presence of Government of India's summer capital in their heart could do nothing to break that isolation. The Ranas who had been ruling these states under some kind of treaty arrangement since 1815, lived only for themselves. Most of them plainly had no resources for an administration of any kind. Such of them as were comparatively resourceful were as autocratic and indifferent to people's welfare as any feudal lord. The people who toiled and worked hard in difficult terrain could eke out a living with difficulty. The revenue system and the agrarian policy of these statelets were such as to give the benefit to the ruler of both famine and fulsome crops. So far as collecting of taxes to fill their own coffers was concerned these rulers followed the policy of 'heads we win, tails you lose'. It was in the face of these hardships that the Himalayan States People's Federation was formed in 1937. To it were affiliated Praja Mandals working in some of the states like Sirmoor, Kalsia, Mandi, Chamba etc. Of these, the most active Praja Mandal was that of Sirmoor whose foremost workers were Y.S. Parmar, Ratra and Sher Jung. Largely as a result of the efforts of these people the Sirmoor Praja Mandal was active for several years in the service of the people. In the thirties and early forties, it organised a few successful agi-

strata of the society. From the Indian states' standard it can be said that the rulers and also the governments of these states were responsive if not responsible, so that the Praja Mandal could never achieve the popularity comparable with that of similar organisations in most of the other states. We have also the testimony of V. P. Menon confirming this fact. Says he "I was also approached from time to time by representatives of the Congress organisations in Central India. It must however be said here that these organisations were far from strong and, excepting in Gwalior and Indore, existed only in name"\*

Even the cases of Gwalior and Indore, pointed out by Menon as exceptions, were not strong enough to launch a state-wide agitation on any political issue. In Gwalior there were some prominent public leaders, notably Vijayavargiya and Takhatmal Jain, who were widely respected, but it would be no exaggeration to say that they were as much amenable to the Maharaja as to the rank and file of their own organisation. Similarly in case of Indore, leaders like V. P. Dravid and Misrilal Gangwal also fell in the same category, particularly the latter. Therefore, during the ten years before independence when many of the states witnessed large-scale agitations, the states of Gwalior and Indore hardly experienced any large-scale disturbance. Popular opinion was further softened by the Maharaja of Gwalior conceding diarchy with the ending of the War in 1945, when certain departments were entrusted to the care of popular ministers, the reserved ones being administered by the ruler through his own nominees.

Nevertheless, the Praja Mandal movement had some base in these states and the AISPC's influence was in evidence in 1942 when public opinion was sought to be

organised by its leaders against the war effort and in favour of India's independence. Good many public leaders were consequently arrested and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.

The three states of Jhabua, Ratlam and Sailana near Indore witnessed a good deal of agitation in early forties against misrule and cruelties perpetrated by the Darbars on the people, particularly the poor peasantry. A grim tragedy that occurred in Jhabua in 1941 was the immediate cause of this agitation and popular resistance. On June 17, 1941, the Excise and Customs Superintendent of Bidwai (Jhabua) and the state police opened fire without any warning on a convoy of Bhil peasants who were going through Jhabua territory to the free **mandi** of Bamnia in Indore state. Three persons were killed and about 40 seriously injured. The only provocation was that the Jhabua state did not want the free mandi of Bamnia to attract the agricultural produce, particularly cotton, of that area. This is how they thought of dissuading the cultivators from going to Bamnia with their cotton.

The Jhabua State People's Conference appealed to the AISPC for help to organise public opinion and get redress for the sufferers. Dr. K. B. Menon, Secretary of AISPC deputed D.N. Kachru to proceed to Jhabua and report on the incident. As a result of this inquiry the facts of the case came to light and were publicised in the Press, the states people's movement received a great fillip. Victims of the tragedy could get some relief and safe passage through Jhabua to Bamnia could be assured largely as a result of this agitation.

Bhopal had a fairly well established State People's Conference, set up as early as 1933. Though the state may

be said to have a good administration, it was out and out bureaucratic and autocratic, the people having no say in it. The Bhopal State People's Conference began to agitate for the induction of popular element in the administration and relief for the peasantry in the state, particularly those settled on the Nawab's personal lands which ran into thousands of acres. The state government resisted these moves and declared the Conference illegal. Its workers were arrested and the entry of non-Bhopali workers of AISPC was banned.

Bhopal's repressive policy came out at its best or worst in 1940 when the workers of the People's Conference, following the lead of the Congress and the AISPC, demanded responsible government. Shakir Ali Khan, Chatur Narayan Malaviya, Kuddus Saeed Bazmi and several other leaders of the Conference were arrested and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

The harsh treatment meted out to these leaders in jail became such a scandal that through the AISPC's efforts the Press took up their cause. Jawaharlal Nehru was moved so much that he addressed a personal letter to the Nawab and sent it through Jai Narain Vyas who visited Bhopal in 1941. This had some effect and political prisoners were thereafter given a better treatment, some of them being promoted to "A" class.

Right up to 1947, the Bhopal People's Conference remained an active organisation whose workers continued to agitate for constitutional reforms in spite of the state government's taboos and repressive laws resulting in sufferings and hardships to the workers.

## TRAVANCORE

The history of the states people's struggle for responsible government in princely territories is oldest in

terms of time in the South Indian states. Almost at the same time when the All-India States People's Conference was being founded in Bombay, the people of Travancore and other South Indian States had organised a South Indian States People's Conference. The first session of this Conference was held in Travancore in 1929, under the presidentship of Sir M. VISHWESWARAYYA. The Conference made a demand for the establishment of responsible government for Travancore and other South Indian states under the aegis of the rulers. The scheme that the Conference drew provided for fully elected legislatures with Ministers responsible to the Legislatures.

The trail which this Conference blazed was responsible for the foundation of the State Congress the same year. The Congress, picking up the threads, started agitating for the establishment of responsible government. Nothing much however came out of this agitation; the State Government proved too clever and misled the agitators into making other concession notably for higher representation in services on community basis. As a result of government's deliberate policy and also due to some other reasons, the popular agitation got diverted into a different direction.

It was in 1937 that the question of responsible government cropped up again. It was raised at a political conference organised by the Travancore District Congress Committee under the presidentship of Dr. PATTABHI SITARAMAYYA. After this conference the resolution was sought to be enforced by the State Congress holding public meetings at many places in Travancore State.

Once again the situation changed as a result of the resolution adopted by the HARIPURA session of the Indian National Congress on the Indian states. In terms

of this resolution the Congress withdrew affiliation from its various branches working in Indian states and reiterated its policy of *non-interference* in the internal affairs of princely territories. Consequently, a separate organisation was founded in Travancore, called, the Travancore State Congress. It was this body which now took charge of the agitation for responsible government in February 1938.

A few months later the Dewan of Travancore, Sir C.P. RAMASWAMY AYYER made a statement in the Travancore Assembly saying that it was not possible to grant full responsible government in the states in view of the obligations of the rulers with the British Crown under the treaties. Although this brought forth a contradiction from Earl WINTENTON in the British Parliament that it was not the policy of the Paramount Power to put obstacles in the way of constitutional advancement in the Indian states, Sir C.P. RAMASWAMY AYYER stuck to his own views. From now on he adopted a policy of repression against the State Congress. As soon as the State Congress announced its programme of action, the Government issued prohibitory orders against holding public meetings in three out of the four districts of Travancore. A NARAYAN PILLAI, a famous advocate of Travancore was prosecuted and sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment on a charge of sedition.

As soon as the prohibitory order was withdrawn after two months, the State Congress started holding public meetings. Now a still more dangerous weapon was employed against the Congress. Organised goondaism was employed to break up public meetings. The resentment which it caused actually added to the strength of the Congress. Seeing that this device had not worked well, the State Government again prohibited the holding of public meetings.

Attempts were made to set up counter-organisations against the State Congress. Some of these organisations, which were brought into being, but could never take roots, were the State People's Federation, the State People's League and the Travancore National Congress.

The principal weapon which the Travancore Government sought to use against the State Congress was the slogan that it was a hand-maid of the Christian community. In its efforts to incite the Hindus, the Government alleged that the Congress was out to establish Christian Raj in Travancore. Though the Christians constituted less than one third of the population of the Travancore state and the whole talk of setting up Christian Raj in the state was utter nonsense, the State Government continued to raise this bogey. The true fact was that the Travancore Congress was in every sense a non-communal organisation which had the backing of the people belonging to all communities.

With its strength increasing every day and the slogan of responsible government attracting support from all sections of the people, the State Congress decided to hold public meetings in defiance of prohibitory orders. These attempts resulted in the State Government coming out openly with its policy of repression. Within a few weeks there were many lathi-charges and six instances of firing by military and police in different towns of the State. In these firings over a dozen people were killed and 20 wounded. Two prominent Members of the State Assembly, both of them non-Congress, resigned their seats in protest against these firings which they thought were as unnecessary as they were uncalled for. Besides, a few hundred people had courted arrest within one month. The bulk of those arrested happened to be eminent leaders of the different communities they belonged to. Among those arrested,



there were as many as 15 Members of the State Legislature. Three newspapers, having large circulations, were suppressed by the Government and entry of a large number of newspapers from outside the state was banned. The Government thus left nothing undone to terrorise the people and to curb the Travancore State Congress.

The tragedy which was being enacted in Travancore was condemned by the Indian National Congress and the Press throughout the country. Even Mahatma Gandhi, who was the main architect of the policy of non-interference and whose solicitude for the rulers of the states was well known, was forced to say that the Travancore Government was resorting to repressive methods far in excess of the requirements, if there were any. His appeals to the Maharaja and repressive methods brought forth no response. Gandhi was particularly critical of the State Government preventing Smt. KAMLA DEVI CHATTOPADHYAYA's entry into the State as "a first class tactical blunder".

At long last, under pressure of public opinion the State Government felt compelled to relax its policy a bit\*. General amnesty was granted to Civil Disobedience prisoners in Travancore on the Maharaja's birthday in October 1938. Nevertheless, the atmosphere continued to be tense. State Congress leaders demanded an impartial enquiry into the shooting which had taken place in several places. Many leaders convicted during the campaign had been debarred from practising for two years, and 19 Members of the State Congress Party in the Legislature had been disqualified just on the eve of the session which was to start in January, 1939. The birthday amnesty did not include all political prisoners. As many as 200 of them were still rotting in jails.

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\*Future events proved that it was only a tactical move. Arrests of leaders like Ramachandran and P. Thanu Pillai and others continued to be made.

All this led the State Congress to feel that there was no change of heart on the part of the Travancore Government. In September 1939 the state government issued a Communique refusing to enter any talks or negotiations with the state Congress on the subject of Constitutional reforms. It was in these circumstance that the Working Committee of the State Congress adopted a resolution in February 1939 laying down a time limit of six weeks before commencing a programme of civil disobedience. The result was that popular resistance, overt or covert continued as also Government's policy of repression. This was the situation in Travancore State at the time the World War broke out in Europe, giving further excuse to the administration to curb popular agitation in the name of the war effort.

Details regarding the affairs of the Travancore State in 1945, 1946 and 1947 and its role in framing the Constitution of free India have been given partly in one of the preceding chapters and partly in the chapter which follows.

## Freedom Eve : Prelude to Integration

The most surprising fact about the Indian states is that even when the transfer of power from British into Indian hands had been clearly indicated by post-war developments and authoritative announcements the princes could not persuade themselves to take any initiative to forestall the future rulers of the country. Indeed they could not assess during the critical years, 1946-1947 the force of public opinion in the states and the new strength that it was soon going to acquire with the Congress emerging as the most powerful factor in united or divided India's political life. To some extent it might be ascribed to the flaw inherent in such an adjustment the benefit of which privileged classes in their wishful thinking generally tend to give to themselves. The short span of two years of Congress rule in seven or eight provinces before the war should have given them some idea of that Party's programme vis-a-vis the Indian states. But it appears that *they failed to read the signs of the time* and thought that, as in the ten preceding years, now too it will be possible for at least bigger states to co exist with Congress idealism without making radical changes in their own set-ups.

The one factor the importance of which they could not assess correctly was the change in the British outlook and the divergence between the attitude of the Conservative Party before the war and the Labour Party after it. Though even before the war Lord Wintertong on behalf of the British Government had issued a clear warning that the princes were mistaken if they thought that they would be able to impede British-India's constitutional progress for all times, the states instead of waking up just absorbed that shock with the help of the Political Department and its officials. Even the implications of Sir Stafford Cripps' proposals made in 1942 escaped the princes. They continued to rely on their own unity and imagined strength.

This alone can account for the extraordinary inaction and lack of initiative on their part during the months when the future of free India was being decided. If the process of integration and merger, which was to begin like a steam-roller soon after the attainment of freedom, had been correctly anticipated and at least partially forestalled by some of the leading states, it cannot be doubted that the shape of things to come might have been materially different. If, for example, bigger states like Hyderabad, Kashmir, Mysore and Baroda had voluntarily offered responsible government to their people well in time and thus fallen into line politically with the rest of the country, the process of inegration of the states would certainly have lost some of its momentum.

It is not suggested that the Department of States under Sardar Pater would have compromised with chaotic conditions in smaller states or autocratic rule in others. All that is contended is that the territorial consolidation that took place in India during the years after freedom might not have made a clean sweep of the institution of monarchy. That is to say, even radical opinion would not have insisted

on pensioning off all the princes if some of them had voluntarily offered to become constitutional monarchs, and satisfied the aspirations of their people before the transfer of power into Indian hands.

As no such thing happened and, as beyond giving vague hints about meeting their subjects' *legitimate demands* not one of the princes took the initiative in actually moving towards that goal, the Government of free India had to take upon itself the role of an arbiter for deciding the future of the Indian Union and its constituent states. The question of the future of the princely order thus became a secondary issue which had somehow to be settled with as little injury to them as could be compatible with democratic ideas and popular wishes. Even then it must be admitted that Sardar Patel conducted this difficult operation in a spirit of conciliation and with exemplary softness. Indeed a section of the radical opinion in the country actually blamed him for being too accommodating to the princes. To the Sardar's clever and statesmanlike moves, the princes responded generously, though many felt that this generosity was born of inexorable necessity and was thus bereft of the quality which might have earned for the princes a better status if only it had been displayed earlier. However, we shall now proceed with a brief narration of the events as they unfolded themselves in 1946—47, particularly after June, 1947.

Let it be noted that the process of political consolidation and administrative unification which started soon after Independence under the leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was a development largely independent of the states people's agitation and the efforts of the AISPC. Though the AISPC lent full cooperation to the Congress leadership in the work of territorial consolidation, yet it would be wrong historically to link this

development with either the aspirations of the states people or the demand of their principal organisation, the All-India States People's Conference. This development cannot rightly be related to any popular agitation in the states. It was the outcome of the larger developments taking place in India, in fact in the post-war world at large. If, for example, the British Government had chosen to stay on in India and resist the national demand for freedom, it is doubtful if the problem of the states had attracted the attention which it did at the hands of the Congress leadership. It is also doubtful if this problem had then lent itself to the ready solution which Sardar Patel was able to find to it. The historian must, therefore, acknowledge that the solution of the states problem as it emerged was largely the outcome of a lucky and fortuitous combination of circumstances and that it came like a corollary to the conferment of freedom on India on the voluntary withdrawal of the British.

The recognition of this fact, however, does not detract from the effective and wise leadership of the AISPC. Nor does it rob the states people of the credit due to them for the happenings that preceded and followed the transfer of power into Indian hands in August, 1947. The great task of national consolidation which would ever count as Sardar Patel's outstanding achievement could have been hardly accomplished but for the full support of the AISPC and the unflinching co-operation of its leaders.

There were certain elements in the states which saw a new opportunity in the lapse of Paramountcy. They dreamt of setting up independent kingdoms within the Indian sub-continent, thus turning India into the Balkans of the East. The Dewan of Travancore, C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, actually declared in June, 1947, in favour of independent Travancore. The

Nizam of Hyderabad who had harboured similar intentions followed suit and his agents were actively conspiring to find an outlet to the Bay of Bengal. The other state, besides Junagarh, which refused to accede to India and preferred independence, was Jammu and Kashmir. There was danger that certain princes of Rajasthan, notably the Maharaja of Jodhpur, envisaged the establishment of an independent kingdom between Pakistan and north-western India, though his state had acceded to the Indian Union. Possibly some other states, drawing inspiration from these moves, harboured similar ambitions.

It is not that the princes were taken unawares or that after the Simla Conference and later on after the British Premier, Mr. Atlee's broadcast they did not see which way the wind was blowing. It would be correct to say that these developments brought about a ferment among the Princes. It is generally the privilege of the common people to experience this uneasy feeling of awareness, but in India one could see the spectacle of the privileged, the Rulers and the Princes getting affected by it. The Maharaja of Bikaner wrote to the Maharaja of Patiala that "*the period of inactivity necessitated by the over-riding consideration of War*" was coming to an end. The Maharaja rightly thought that the United Kingdom and the British public were impatient for a real move forward which would assure self-government to India and give her the status of a dominion. What is equally important is that the Maharaja of Patiala fully agreed with this thesis.

This happened in March 1945. Two months later, the Nawab of Bhopal, Chancellor of the chamber of Princes, thought it prudent to convene a meeting of the special committee of Rulers and Ministers to examine the question of political adjustment between the states and the British

India. At this meeting they discussed the matter threadbare from all angles but could not arrive at any constructive solution, for the simple reason that they had not yet given up hope that the British Government will not fail to fulfil its obligations of defence or "to safeguard the non-acceding states against economic strangulation or discrimination by the dominion Government."

The story of the Parliamentary Delegation, Cabinet Mission and the moves and counter-moves in India in the wake of the great changes has already been given. The princes held discussions with an eye on the future, but the only future that loomed before them was their own. Their own prerogatives, status and privileges became for them such an obsession that it obstructed them to see anything else. The princes being in such a state of mind and their people in all cases being as irreconciled as ever, it was not much of a hard job for the astute men of the States Department to have them acceded to India.

This is how it happened. When all political and constitutional prognoses had been set at rest and a date for the transfer of power had been fixed, Sardar Patel set about the task of tackling the princes, firstly, with a view to securing their accession to the Indian Union in case the division of India took place, and secondly, with the object finally to consolidate the states territories with the rest of the country. As the map of India would show, nearly all the states with about a dozen exceptions, fell within Indian territory. The only states which geographically formed part of proposed Pakistan were Bahawalpur, Kalat, Mirpur, Chitral and some other Frontier states in north-western India. There were also some states which had common borders with both India and Pakistan, namely, Kashmir, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Jaisalmer in the north-west



and Tripura in the east. The problem of states was thus of particular importance for the Indian Union.

### STORY OF ACCESSION

With the announcement of June, 3, 1947, by Lord Mountbatten according to which His Majesty's Government would be prepared to relinquish power to two Governments, India and Pakistan, on the basis of Dominion Status, the wheel of events in Indian states started moving faster than ever before. The immediate reaction to this announcement of certain states, notably Travancore, Hyderabad and Bhopal was distressing, to say the least. The rulers of these states saw an opportunity in the coming transfer of power to declare themselves independent. Indian leaders had to take note of these developments with a view to checking these fissiparous trends.

The Standing Committee of the All-India States People's Conference met on 11th June. It adopted a resolution demanding that the Political Department and its agencies should be handed over to the Government of India or a new department should be created immediately to discharge the functions of the Political Department. After discussions among Indian leaders, Lord Mountbatten and officers of the Political Department, it was decided to set up a new department to deal with matters concerning the states. Prime Minister Nehru insisted that the official announcement of June 3, should be satisfactorily clarified to ensure that political and administrative functions would continue to be *in operation in the states and the lapse of Paramountcy* would not lead to independence of any of the states. After having been released from their obligations to the Crown, which through the Viceroy provided the nexus between the states and the Central and Provincial Governments, the states could not be allowed to live in an administrative vacuum.

Jinnah opposed Nehru's stand and rejected his views and the Congress thesis regarding the future of the states. He declared that constitutionally and legally the states would be independent sovereign states on the termination of Paramountcy. Neither the British Government nor the British Parliament nor any other power or body, he said, could compel the states to do anything contrary to their free will and accord.

The situation that seemed to be emerging was rather dismal. In the words of V.P. Menon, the general tendency among the rulers was to make the best of the bargaining position in which the lapse of Paramountcy had placed them. "The fact that during the second World War many of the major states had strengthened their armed forces could not be ignored. The decision, therefore, that with the withdrawal of the British, the Indian states comprising two-fifths of the land must return to a state of complete political isolation was fraught with the gravest danger to the integrity of the country. And so the prophets of gloom predicted the ship of Indian freedom would founder on the rock of the states."\*

In accordance with a decision of the Cabinet of the Interim Government taken on June 25, the States Department was set up on July 5, 1947, with Sardar Patel as the Minister in charge. On this day to mark the inauguration of the new Department, Sardar Patel issued a memorable statement which at once clarified Government's policy vis-a-vis Indian states and allayed some of the fears of the princes. The Sardar assured the states that "no more was asked of them than accession on the three subjects of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications." He further assured them

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\* White Paper on Indian States, 1948. p. 18

that the states would be dealt with fairly in a spirit of equality and only considerations of mutual interest and welfare would weigh with the States Department. In a strain of realism, however, Patel added that the alternative to cooperation in the general interest was anarchy and chaos which would overwhelm great and small in a common ruin if the states and provinces were unable to act together in the minimum of common tasks.

This development made the question of accession of the states to the Dominion of India as one of vital importance, since an overwhelmingly large number of them formed part of India geographically. On July 25 the Viceroy called a special meeting of the Chamber of Princes at which a Negotiating Committee was set up to negotiate the terms of states' accession to India. The first step taken in this direction was the formulation of the Instrument of Accession as a result of discussions between the States Department and the prince's representatives.

Now began a series of formal conferences between the princes and their advisers, on the one side, and Sardar Patel and officers of the State Department, on the other. Rulers of Patiala, Gwalior, Bikaner and Nawanager and Dewans of other important states had discussions with Sardar Patel on July 10 and again on July 25. One important result of these talks was that a number of rulers broke away from the Nawab of Bhopal whose opposition to accession of the states to India was already known. Discarding of his leadership and the decision to sign the Instrument of Accession by these rulers was, therefore, an important development.

The first two weeks of August, 1947, were of crucial importance. It was a race against time, for the consequences of prominent states geographically included in India but not

acceding to this Dominion before the transfer of power would have been unpredictable. Thanks to Sardar Patel's tact and Lord Mountbatten's advice to the princes, the rulers of all the states geographically contiguous to India had signed the Instrument of Accession\* and the Standstill Agreement by August 15. The only exceptions were Hyderabad, Kashmir, Junagadh and two small Kathiawad states.

Accession of nearly all the states falling within India thus ensured the fundamental unity of the country. Administrative continuity and political unity had now been placed beyond the pale of doubt. The gap which, as Menon says, had threatened to balkanize the country was effectively stopped by the success of the interim Government's accession policy.

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\*The main Instrument of Accession was signed only by jurisdictional states, 140 in number. Other states like Kathiawad, Gujarat and Simla Hill states were asked to sign different Instruments applicable to them in accordance with the powers enjoyed by them.

## TOWARDS INTEGRATION : THE JUGGERNAUT MOVES ON

The groups of states which were in the grip of widespread agitation and which cried for early tackling on pain of confusion and anarchy leading to blood-shed, were the Orissa and Chhatisgarh states situated in eastern India. The rulers of Orissa and Chhatisgarh states had already made common cause against the Praja Mandal agitators. To safeguard their own interests, they had started thinking in terms of a union of their states ever since the Cabinet Mission's proposals were made public. In July, 1947, the union of these states was formed and as from 1st August, it had actually started functioning. All the states with few exceptions, notably the big states of Mayurbhanj and Bastar, had joined the union. Apparently the union had all the features of a federal structure in which resources are pooled and power shared, but, strangely, there was no provision in its constitution for a popular legislature. There is no wonder that the formation of the Eastern States Union failed to have any effect on the agitation of the Praja Mandals and the popular demand for responsible government. Serious trouble was reported from Nilgiri and Dhenkanal states, where the agitators had threatened to

storm the palaces of the rulers and to set up parallel governments.

The Government of Orissa could not be an indifferent spectator to this kind of lawlessness. It reported to the Government of India about the situation in Nilgiri. The Central Government authorised the Orissa Government to take over the administration of the state. The ruler acquiesced in this step and he openly admitted that his resources were too inadequate to provide the state with a modern administration.

Even before the administration of Nilgiri was taken over, the Chief Minister of Orissa, Harekrushna Mehtab had sent a memorandum to Sardar Patel acquainting him with the deteriorating law and order conditions in the Orissa states. He had said that something would have to be done to bring these states and the province of Orissa under a common administration, at least in respect of certain important subjects. With the formation of the Eastern States Union and the mounting tempo of agitation for responsible government in these states, the Ministry of States had to give urgent attention to the problem of Orissa.

After preliminary conferences between representatives of the governments of India and Orissa and the Regional Commissioner for the states, it was agreed that Orissa states could not be merged to form a separate union of their own as they cut through the territory of the province at several places and did not form an integral block of territory. The only two alternatives, therefore, were either to bring about some kind of administrative cooperation between Orissa and these states or to merge these states with Orissa and the neighbouring Chhatisgarh states with the Central Provinces. Eventually, the latter alternative found favour with Sardar

Patel and the Ministry of States. Incidentally, it was also in keeping with the line of argument indicated in the Simon Commission's report\* which had recommended the creation of a separate Orissa province of which eventually the Orissa states might also form a part.

One difficulty, however, arose after the proposal of merging these states with the province of Orissa was to be carried through. Such a step, it was thought, would be in contravention of the assurances given by the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten and Sardar Patel to the princes only a month earlier. It would have been interpreted as an unseemly show of force at the very start of the transfer of power into Indian hands. Nor could the guarantee of the preservation of their internal freedom be taken lightly by the States Ministry. Sardar Patel, therefore, launched his concerted drive to win over the princes through a friendly approach. His greatest achievement lay in the fact that by the use of his persuasive powers, tact and diplomacy, the Sardar succeeded in persuading nearly all the rulers with only a few exceptions to divest themselves of all ruling powers and to surrender their privileges voluntarily.

The first trial of strength was destined to come from the eastern region. To leave nothing to chance Sardar Patel left for Cuttack in the second week of December, 1947 to negotiate with the rulers of Orissa states. There was not much difficulty in tackling B and C class states which were smaller in size and were particularly threatened by the agitators led by Praja Mandal workers. Sardar Patel told them that in their own interests the rulers should cease exposing themselves as targets of public criticism. India was passing through troublous days and the rulers could ill afford to take such a risk. If they agreed to surrender ruling powers to the Government of

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\*Simon Commission's Report Vol. II

India, they could be sure of protection, peace and progress in their territories, a sizeable privy purse to maintain them and their families and the continuity of their dynasties.

After some haggling over the amounts to be fixed as their privy purses, the rulers agreed to abide by Sardar Patel's advice and they signed the Instrument of Merger, a draft of which was ready in V.P. Menon's pocket. Tackling the bigger rulers of A class states presented some difficulty, but Menon was able to iron them out and persuaded them also to execute the Instrument of Merger a day later. In this way all the states of Orissa were merged with the province of Orissa by the middle of December, 1947.

Administratively, the Mayurbhanj state did not form part of the Orissa states. The ruler of this state, therefore, had kept aloof from the merger. Another reason adduced by him for not taking part in merger negotiations was that he had already granted responsible government to his people. Within a few months, however, he found that the affairs of the state were in a mess and that it was a mistake not to have merged his state with the neighbouring province. As a result of its ruler's express wish, Mayurbhanj was also merged with Orissa on grounds of cultural and linguistic affinity with that province.

### Chhattisgarh States

From Cuttack Sardar Patel arrived at Nagpur to tackle the Chhattisgarh states. Here too, a crescendo of popular agitation had been going on for the grant of responsible government. This agitation conducted by the Praja Mandals under the guidance and with the support of the all-India States People's Conference had created the desired atmosphere for Sardar Patel to negotiate with the rulers who had been brought into a proper frame of mind by the danger that



loomed before them. A series of meetings and conferences with the rulers of Chhatisgarh states started immediately on Sardar's arrival at Nagpur. The ruler (who happened to be a regent Rani) of Nandgaon was the very first to sign the Instrument of Merger and thus set the ball rolling. As discussions proceeded and the rulers grasped the implications of Sardar Patel's offer all of them signed the draft agreement one after the other.

With the merger of all the eastern states with Orissa and the Central Provinces, the union of the eastern states was automatically dissolved. Subsequently, the Government of India delegated to the Governments of Orissa and the Central Provinces the power to administer the states which had merged with them in the same way as districts in a province, only certain functions were treated as reserved for the Government of India.

### VINDHYA PRADESH

There was another group of states lying between the district of Bilaspur in present-day Madhya Pradesh and Allahabad and Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. These states known as Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand were reminiscent of the Bundela and Baghela fighters who moved about sometimes as freebooters and sometimes as commanders of the Moghul army in that region. At the time of freedom, these 34 states were best known for their backwardness and utter lack of communications. Among these the only state which could be described as big and viable was that of Rewa in Baghelkhand. These states presented a number of alternatives when the question of consolidating them came up. It was suggested that Baghelkhand and Bundelkhand might be merged with C P and U P. respectively. But it was not considered feasible, for C P. had only recently got a number of Chhatisgarh states taggad to it and U P. was already an

unmanageably big state. In exchange for certain concessions to him and his state, the Maharaja of Rewa agreed to the formation of one union of all the states. But the conditions he stipulated turned out to be palpably unreasonable and the matter had to be left at that for some time.

The most surprising thing is that the popular leaders of Rewa fully supported the Maharaja in his demands. Menon's personal discussions with the Maharaja, however, proved promising and he was able to persuade him as also other rulers of these states to accede to the demand of the Praja Mandals to have one union of all the states. After further discussions, the covenant was finalised and the state of Vindhya Pradesh was created, with Rewa Maharaja as the Rajpramukh.

To begin with, the union had two Ministries—one for Bundelkhand and the other for Baghelkhand. But this experiment of two separate Ministries proved a failure and soon after a composite Ministry was appointed for the whole region. Even this Ministry created new records in the matter of corruption, nepotism and inefficiency, so much so that the Ministers had to be prosecuted on account of various allegations made against them.

All this necessitated fresh discussions with the Maharajas of Rewa and Panna. A fresh agreement was drafted, abrogating the original covenant. According to it, every ruler was required to cede to the Government of India full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and powers in relation to the governance of his state. After protracted discussions the rulers began to sign the new agreement one by one. Only the Maharaja of Rewa held out. However, considerations of personal advantage and financial benefits won over the Maharaja of Rewa who also signed the new

agreement. The attitude of the Vindhya Pradesh Congress Committee was disappointing, for it adopted a resolution against the State Ministry's proposal and the new agreement. For months, the fate of these states hung between two alternatives, a separate union and merger with the neighbouring provinces

But there was another surprise in store for Sardar Patel. He called the Chief Ministers of U.P. and C.P. to New Delhi to decide between themselves as to how best these states should be divided between their two provinces. The Chief Ministers could not arrive at an agreement. This forced Sardar Patel's hands, who had no alternative but to take over Vindhya Pradesh as a Centrally-administered area. It was put under a Lt Governor.

### The Kathiawad States

The next group of states to be tackled by the Ministry of States was Kathiawad which formed an integral block of princely territories. The merger of Orissa and Chattisgarh states with the neighbouring provinces had already set the tone, but the position of Kathiawad states was somewhat different. The law and order situation there presented different problems. As the territory of the neighbouring province of Bombay, unlike that of Orissa, was not interlocked with states territories, a number of alternatives suggested themselves to the negotiators. In the first instance, it was thought that the entire Kathiawad territory might be reorganised under four units headed by bigger states like Bhavnagar and Nawanagar. But objections were raised to that by smaller states which thought that they were being sacrificed to fatten the bigger ones. On grounds of viability also it was thought that four units in Kathiawad would be far too many and each one of them too small in respect of population and resources.

Another alternative was to merge all the states with Bombay. That appeared to be neither feasible nor necessary, for in between these two territories lay the state of Baroda. The alternative which appealed to everyone best was that all the states be united to form one unit. The States Ministry officials started working on this plan. A scheme was prepared for amalgamating all the states, big and small, into one unit to be called the United State of Kathiawad.

The most welcome development in this region was the offer of full responsible government to Bhavnagar by its ruler. Bhavnagar, one of the bigger Kathiawad states was the first to feel the pressure of the demand for responsible government. Its Maharaja offered to concede it on Gandhiji's and Sardar Patel's advice. It was agreed that Balwantray Mehta would be the first Prime Minister of Bhavnagar under the scheme. Responsible government in Bhavnagar was inaugurated by Sardar Patel on 15th January, 1948. A good beginning in Kathiawad had thus been made.

From Bhavnagar the scene shifted to Rajkot. Here, V.P. Menon started his discussions under Sardar Patel's directions with the rulers of Kathiawad states. In his speech Menon placed his cards on the table for everyone to see. Giving the example of the eastern states, Menon said that the problems of Kathiawad states were not dissimilar. He explained to them the implications of different alternatives that lay before them. Clinching the issue, Menon said towards the end of his exhortation :

"The logic of facts has to be recognized. It is not possible for the 222 states of Kathiawad to continue their separate existence under modern conditions for very much longer. The extinction of the separate existence of the

states may not be palatable, but unless something is done in good time to stabilise the situation in Kathiawad, the march of events may bring about still more unpalatable results. Whether you should recognise this truth which is obvious to any outside observer or whether you should continue as now and accept the risks which the future may have in store for you, is for Your Highnesses alone to decide. The Government of India will gladly accept a scheme for the unification of Kathiawad if it commends itself to you and I have reason to believe that such a scheme will also have the blessing of Mahatma Gandhi' \*

The first round of negotiations proved promising. Bhavnagar had already conceded responsible government. The ruler of Dhrangadhra openly offered to support Menon's scheme of unification of Kathiawad states. Much now depended on the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar. It must be said to his credit that the Jam Sahib realised that the alternative to a united Kathiawad was the disintegration of the states, by way of their merger with Bombay or in some other way. After some more discussion among themselves the rulers of Kathiawad unanimously agreed to form a union. It was agreed that a constituent assembly would be elected for framing the new state based on full responsible government. In the event of the formation of a linguistic province comprising all the Gujarati speaking areas, the Kathiawad union would be automatically merged with that unilingual unit. It was also agreed that the jurisdiction of the Bombay High Court would be extended to Kathiawad till such time as it had its own High Court. The rulers of Salute states formed a council of their own and they elected Jam Sahib as the first head of the state, called Rajpramukh. Other terms and conditions were stated in a covenant which all the

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\* The Story of the Integration of the Indian States p. 177

rulers signed. The covenant signed by the rulers of Kathiawad came to be looked upon as a model which other states unions followed later. It is both an exhaustive and precisely drafted document.\*

The covenant was signed by the rulers of Salute and non-Salute states whereas the rulers of semi-jurisdictional and non-jurisdictional states and Talugas were asked to sign an agreement by which they agreed to the merger of their estates and Talugas with the United States of Kathiawad.

Signing of the covenant and the creation of the United States of Kathiawad was a big event. It symbolised in itself the revolution that was taking place in free India. It cast its shadow far beyond the territories of Kathiawad or even India. The people of Kathiawad had been under the personal rule of princes for centuries. Parting with power on their part was naturally accompanied by an expression of deep emotion. V.P. Menon who was the prime mover in this drama and was present at the occasion, describes the scene thus:—

"No ruler thought even a month previously that he would have so soon to part with his state and rulership. Something which has been in their families for generations and which they had regarded as sacrosanct had disappeared as it were in the twinkling of an eye. Though all of them put up a bold front, the mental anguish they were going through was writ large on their faces. Neither at Cuttack nor at Nagpur had I seen anything to compare with what I witnessed at Rajkot. The scene here was to the last degree moving and will ever linger in my memory."\*\*

The United States of Kathiawad was inaugurated by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel at Jamnagar on February 15, 1948.

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\*See Appendix B for full text.

\*\*Ibid p. 185

The Jam Sahib was administered the oath of office as Rajpramukh. Members of the presidium of rulers were also sworn in. On being proposed by Balwantray Mehta, U.N. Dhebar was elected leader of the Ministerial party.

One might think that these developments were considered by the rulers of Kathiawad as something inevitable and they acquiesced in them in a spirit of helplessness or despondency. It would be wrong to imagine so. The proudest among these rulers, the Jam Sahib gave the lie to it in his speech as Rajpramukh, in the course of which he said

'The point that I wish to make on behalf of my order in Kathiawad is this: it is not as if we were tired monarchs who were fanned to rest. It is not as if we have been bullied into submission. We have by our own free volition pooled our sovereignties and covenanted to create this new state so that the united state of Kathiawad and the unity of India may be more fully achieved and so that our people may have that form of government which is today most acceptable to them and which I hope and pray will prove beneficial to them.'

As the question of Junagadh's accession was finally decided as a result of referendum, Junagadh also joined the United States of Kathiawad in January, 1949. A supplementary covenant was executed providing for the integration with Saurashtra (as the new State of Kathiawad came to be known) of Junagadh, Mannavadar, Mongrol, Bantwa, Babriwad and Sardargarh. This completed the integration of Kathiawad states and their consolidation into one unit. With the creation of Saurashtra and the merger of Orissa and Chhattisgarh states with neighbouring provinces, Sardar Patel may be said to have broken the back of the

states problem. Arithmetically, he had finished more than one-half of the job, but, as later events showed, in actual fact the hard core of the problem still remained to be tackled.

### Deccan And Gujarat States

Between Kathiawad and Bombay in the north, lay another group of 17 jurisdictional states and 127 semi-jurisdictional and non-jurisdictional units. There was also the big state of Baroda which had an independent existence politically and did not form part of the Gujarat Agency. In the south of Bombay Presidency, there was another group of 18 states, including Kolhapur, known as the Deccan states. After settling the future of Kathiawad states, the Ministry of States turned its attention to these two groups flanking the province of Bombay.

The rulers of the Deccan states had shown some shrewdness by anticipating the course of events. As early as July, 1946, the rulers of some of these states had decided to form a union. In order to give it a good start, they wanted this proposal to be blessed by Gandhiji and other Indian leaders. They entrusted the task of drafting a covenant to K.M. Munshi. Though Gandhi's reaction to their proposal was not very encouraging, for he lay greater emphasis on the grant of responsible government to their people than on the setting up of the proposed union, the rulers went ahead with the task. They managed to get on the right of the Congress also. The Congress appointed a sub-committee consisting of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Shankar Rao Deo for fixing the privy purses of the rulers. The covenant was signed and the union formed, but only 8 out of the 17 states joined it.

Evidently all was not well with the states that had



been left out, for as soon as the union was formed, the Raja of Jamkhandi announced his willingness to merge his state with the Bombay province if his people so desired. This wish of the ruler was ratified by the Jamkhandi Praja Mandal. This incident diverted popular attention to the new alternative which robbed the union of the glamour the rulers expected it to have. Nor were the affairs of the union proceeding smoothly. There were sharp differences about the appointment of Ministers, and all efforts at arriving at a mutually acceptable solution failed.

It appears that the Praja Mandals of the merging states had not been fully consulted and some of them were more in favour of merger with Bombay. This was the view expressed by a delegation of Praja Mandals from Jat and Akalkot states which met V P Menon in Delhi. This was followed by a delegation of the rulers of the Deccan states coming to Delhi and meeting Sardar Patel. The Sardar advised them to agree to merge their states with Bombay if that was the wish of the people of their states,

When two weeks later the news of the merger of Orissa and Chhattisgarh states with the neighbouring provinces was announced, there was a natural swing in favour of the merger proposal. All the rulers of the states which had not joined the union declared themselves in favour of merger with Bombay. The Praja Mandals of the constituent states of the Deccan states union had also started agitating in favour of merger. At the very first meeting of the constituent assembly of the union, a resolution was adopted saying that "all the states forming units of the United Deccan states do merge with the province of the Indian Union."

The affairs of the Deccan states in the early months

of 1948 were complicated by certain uncommon events, which caused widespread disturbances and brought about a state of upheaval. After Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, when it was known that the assassin was a Maharashtrian Brahman, widespread rioting, looting and arson took place in these places, the Brahman community being the target of attack. The law and order situation which was already unstable further deteriorated as a result of these untoward incidents. It is possible that this factor influenced the rulers of the Deccan states to decide in favour of entrusting their affairs to the Government of Bombay rather than shoulder the responsibility of maintaining peace and law and order themselves. This was a factor which also influenced political events in the neighbouring Kolhapur state, the biggest princely territory in this area, which administratively did not form part of the Deccan states.

By February, 1948, all the rulers of the Deccan states were obliged to ask the Ministry of States to accept the merger of their territories with Bombay even before they had signed the agreements. After the question of privy purses was settled according to the normal formula and the usual assurances of rights and privileges to the princes were held out and accepted, the administration of 14 of these states was taken over by Bombay Government in February. The two states which had not so far responded, namely, Sawantwadi and Janzira, followed a few weeks later. In Sawantwadi a disturbing situation had developed and the Praja Mandal had set up a parallel government and arrested all the state officials. Consequently, the Raja begged that his territory be merged with Bombay. In case of Janzira, no difficulty was experienced as the administration of law and order of the state was already vested in the Bombay Government. The Nawab was merely asked to

sign the Instrument of Merger

Let us now take the case of Gujarat states. It was not unnatural that the formation of the United States of Kathiawad should rouse hopes in the rulers of Gujarat states that they could also form a similar union and possibly seek union with Baroda. That was the only way they could have maintained their separate entity. Somehow they were keen to avoid merger with Bombay. But when the ruler of Baroda was approached, he rejected the offer of the rulers for a union with Baroda. This was followed by negotiations between the Ministry of States and the rulers of Gujarat states. The latter went on resisting the merger proposal to the very last, till they got convinced that there was no other alternative to it.

As in other cases, the question of privy purses was then taken up. As soon as it was decided to their satisfaction, the rulers agreed to integrate their states with the province of Bombay. In their statement, they said that they had "*cheerfully responded to the call of duty and decided to take the first step in forming the province of Maha Gujarat by integrating our states with the province of Bombay.*"

The small state of Danta which had not signed the merger agreement, was persuaded to do so a few months later. As for the territory known as the Dangs, lying between Surat and Nasik districts of Bombay, it was formed into a separate district of Bombay province on account of its peculiar situation and the composition of its population, a long majority of whom are Advasis.

The only states which still remained to be dealt with in this region were Baroda in the north of Bombay and Kolhapur in the south. As both of these states were viable, they could not be forced, in terms of

the Viceroy's assurance, to liquidate themselves. But, consequent upon large-scale disturbances that occurred in the state early in 1948 the situation in Kolhapur was such that the ruler himself felt inclined to accept the States Ministry's proposal to have an administrator nominated by the Government of India. The Maharaja, who did not enjoy his people's undivided loyalty behaved like a man of peace.\* When he was invited for talks in New Delhi in February, 1949, he agreed to sign the agreement to merge his state with Bombay without much haggling. The unsatisfactory law and order situation and the lean finances of the state helped him to decide in favour of merger, which brought him a handsome privy purse. With the merger of Kolhapur the future of the Deccan states was settled once for all.\*\*

### Madhya Bharat Union

Like Saurashtra, there was a big chunk of territory right in the heart of India under the rule of Indian princes. Comprising 25 states in the Central India Agency, these states formed more or less an integral block of territory with an area of 47,000 sq. miles. The principal states were Gwalior (area 26387 Sq. miles, population 37 lakhs) and Indore (area 9902 Sq. miles, population 15 lakhs).

Both of these states being viable, the subject of merger had to be broached delicately. The Gwalior Maharaja had already announced his intention in December 1946 to grant responsible government to his people and in May, 1947, he

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\* After the death of the late Kolhapur ruler in 1940, an infant was adopted and recognised as heir and a Council of Regency set up. Soon after the child died in March, 1947. The Maharaja of Dewas Senior was now recognised by the Political Department as the ruler of Kolhapur. The Dowager Maharani could never reconcile herself to this succession. Her opposition coupled with the fact that he was an outsider in the eyes of many of his subjects, proved to be a serious handicap for the new ruler.

\*\*Regarding the merger of Baroda, see page,

had actually instilled an interim government of popular representatives. A constitution making body was also set up. This was an excellent lead, for no other big state had gone so far up till now to meet the wishes of the people. Just about this time representatives of other smaller states of Central India met and expressed their preference for a bigger union, including Gwalior and Indore. This made it necessary for the Ministry of States to sound the Maharaja of Gwalior in the matter. After detailed discussions between the States Ministry and the Maharajas of Gwalior, Indore and other states, it was agreed in principle to form one union of all the states of this region.

It was not a little disappointing that the Maharaja of Indore who had gone out of his way to address a letter to the President of the United States during the last war stressing the imperative need of satisfying India's national aspirations, should now be unwilling to lend his help in the formation of the union. He had somehow started favouring the idea of evolving a "third force" out of the states.

When the question of integration arose, after the merger of the Orissa states, the main problem which the States Ministry had to face was how to bring the two viable states of Gwalior and Indore into a single union. A number of alternatives were thought of and discussed among rulers and political organisations working in the states. But ultimately it was the union of Indore and Gwalior and all the other states of Central India which appealed to representatives of Praja Mandals of these states whom V P Menon met in Bombay. But from Gwalior and Indore, both of which were viable units, there was some opposition. It was also insinuated that Maratha states were being singled out for obliteration while Rajput states like Jodhpur, Bikaner and

Jaipur were being left alone.\* The real paradox was that both Gwalior and Indore which showed clear preference for continuing by virtue of being viable states were also supported by a strong body of local opinion in their respective territories. There was a genuine feeling of loyalty to the Gaddi in these states.

At this stage Sardar Patel himself stepped in and had discussions with the Gwalior Maharaja. He argued that if viable states were allowed to exist as separate units, the rights and privileges of the rulers would be at the mercy of the local legislatures and he was not confident that the local leaders would give the rulers a square deal. He was also against two unions being set up. Sardar Patel's argument had some effect on the Maharaja of Gwalior and subject to satisfactory settlement of the privy purse and few other privileges, both he and the Maharaja of Indore eventually agreed to the integration of their states into one union. In their own interest, these two rulers agreed to accept what was being offered to them. A bird in hand was any day better than two in the bush.

This was followed by the drafting of a covenant and other routine settlements in respect of privy purse and privileges of other rulers of Central India states, except Bhopal. The covenant was signed in April, 1948, and in May, 1948 the Madhya Bharat union was inaugurated by Prime Minister Nehru.

### **Punjab States Union**

The six states of East Punjab, Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Faridkot, Malerkotla and Kapurthala were integrated to form the union of Patiala and East Punjab States (PEPSU) in July, 1948 after getting over some initial difficulties peculiar to

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\*V.P. Menon—page 210,

the situation then obtaining in Punjab. Consequent on the partition of the country and large scale influx of non Muslim refugees from West Pakistan and the emigration of Muslim population living in these states, these territories as also the rest of the Punjab were in the grip of abnormal conditions at that time. Just at the time when informal discussions were about to be started with the state rulers trouble arose in Faridkot between the Raja and the States People's Conference of which Sheikh Abdulla was the President that year. It was reported that the Raja was ill treating political prisoners and the Muslim evacuees. The complaints became so serious that the Ministry of States had to intervene. Subsequently, a meeting of the rulers of Gwalior, Bikaner, Patiala and Nawanagar was called by Lord Mountbatten to consider the matter. The best way out of the difficulty, it was decided, would be for the Government of India to take over the administration of Faridkot state, which was done immediately.

As had happened in the case of other groups of states several alternatives were mooted regarding the future of East Punjab states also. It was suggested that these states might be merged with Punjab. Another proposal was that all the five smaller states be merged with Patiala which was the biggest of them all. There were other combinations and permutations discussed among politicians and administrators. But the States Ministry thought that the best solution would be to merge all the six states into one union. To this the rulers of Nabha, Kapurthala, Jind and Malerkotla raised no serious objection but the response from the Maharaja of Patiala was not encouraging. He favoured the idea of Patiala remaining as a separate unit, subject to whatever conditions the States Ministry or the local popular elements

As another concession to him and the Patiala state, the new unit was named Patiala and East Punjab States Union. The small states of Kalsia and Nalagarh, which had so far been grouped with Punjab hill states, were also merged with PEPSU, mainly because of the close relationship between their ruling houses and the Maharaja of Patiala. The Patiala and East Punjab States Union was inaugurated by Patel on 15th July, 1948.

This was followed by the tackling of other problems connected with the future administration of the new Union. The main problem was that of the selection of popular Ministers. There were, of course, Praja Mandals in each one of the covenanting states. In addition to that there was the Akali Dal, the principal organisation of the Sikhs. A few months before the merger another organisation called Lok Seva Sabha had sprung up. All these organisations started pulling strings in favour of their nominees. The Congress and the Praja Mandals could not have things their own way. Ultimately, a caretaker government had to be set up with Gian Singh Rarewala, an official of Patiala state, as Premier. This gave the union a start of sorts. But whatever the weaknesses and consequent shake-ups, of which there were many, the advantages which the administrative consolidation brought with it proved to be weighty enough to put the affairs of the union on a fairly workable footing eventually.

Apart from the six states which went to form the union of Patiala and East Punjab States, there were three small states under Muslim rulers in south-east Punjab, namely, Loharu, Pataudi and Dojana. All of these were merged with East Punjab because of their geographical position and small size.



### Himachal Pradesh

Another big union formed was that of the Himalayan states known as the Simla Hill States. These states, about 25 in number, were given a slightly different treatment. Himachal Pradesh, as this union was called, was given the status of a Union Territory under a Chief Commissioner appointed by the Union Government. At the time of the transfer of power, conditions in these states were so disturbed that the rulers of Suket, Balsan and Chamba had on their own handed over the administrations of their states to the Government of India. For certain reasons only one state, that of Bilaspur was left out and put under a separate Chief Commissioner. This state was the sight of the Bhakra Dam which was then under construction and for that reason, it had to be treated as a separate Union Territory till such time as this Hydro-Electric project had taken shape \*

### Rajasthan

The caution and attention which went to the integration of Rajputana states had not so far been claimed any other group of states. Firstly, these 22 states (19 salute and 3 non-salute ones) could claim to have some historical importance by virtue of their continuous existence for nearly ten centuries. A few of these states were no doubt a recent creation, but the region as a whole had a strong and unbroken monarchical tradition. Secondly, the Rajput princes were a hypersensitive lot who maintained a rigid gradation among themselves, almost like the caste system. Thirdly, the concept of monarchy had not gone down so deep in any other region of India as in Rajputana. People there had got accustomed to personal rule so that loyalty to the ruling prince had become their second nature. Then, there were

\*Bilaspur too was subsequently merged in Himachal Pradesh in 1954

local conditions and other circumstances which combined to make the process of integration in the case of these states a slow and gradual affair.

Unification of the Rajputana states was achieved in five stages. The first stage consisted of the merger of four states, Alwar, Karoli, Dholpur and Bharatpur situated in southern Rajputana. It so happened that Alwar and Bharatpur had been considerably rattled by communal riots preceding and following the partition of the country. In 1947, Alwar had Dr. N.B. Khare, a rabid Hindu Mahasabhiite as its Premier. It was reported that he had a hand in rousing the Hindus against the Meo community, who were Muslim by faith and jingoes by tradition. Bharatpur and Dholpur which had also sizeable Meo populations were alleged to have been affected by the communal feeling following the example of Alwar. As if that was not enough, Alwar was also suspected to be connected with the conspiracy responsible for Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. It was reported that the murderer of Gandhiji and others connected with the Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangh had been holding secret meetings and practising shooting in Alwar. Therefore, immediately after Gandhiji's assassination, Dr. Khare and the Maharaja of Alwar were called to Delhi and interned in the city. The administration of Alwar was taken over by the States Ministry.

Meanwhile enquiries were started into allegations against the Maharajas of Alwar and Bharatpur and Dr. Khare. The administration of Bharatpur too was taken over by the Government of India. Without waiting any further, the Government of India decided to form a union of these two states and the contiguous states of Dholpur and Karauli. It was given the name of Matsya Union and was inaugurated in March, 1948. !

This was the first Rajasthan union. The next step towards the unification of Rajasthan was facilitated by the progressive attitude of the rulers of Kotah, Jhalawar and Dungarpur. These rulers were already wedded to the idea of a union and had done some thinking by holding discussions among Ministers of different states. In consultation with the Praja Mandals and Congress organisations in these states, it was decided to form a union of Kotah, Bundi, Dungarpur, Jhalawar, Kishangarh and Shahpura. The Tonk state also joined the union, one of its territories falling in Malwa going with Madhya Bharat. The ruler of Kotah was elected Rajpramukh.

Only a few days after the formation of this union, the Maharana of Udaipur communicated his willingness to join it. In view of the deep respect in which the House of Udaipur has always been held by all Rajput states, particularly those which had merged to form the second union, the Maharana's gesture was welcomed and Udaipur also joined the union. The ruler of Kotah gladly stepped down to vacate the office of Rajpramukh for the Maharana, himself becoming Uprajpramukh. This was the third union of Rajasthan.

Negotiations with other states which had so far stayed out namely, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Jaisalmer were going on. Sardar Patel had suggested that these four states should also join the Union of Rajasthan. There was a great deal of give and take over the question of the election of Rajpramukh and the selection of the capital. After a *satisfactory settlement of these questions*, all the rulers agreed to the formation of Greater Rajasthan by joining the existing union. In consultation with popular leaders, Jai Narain Vyas, Hiralal Shastri, Maniklal Verma and Gokulbhai Bhatt, it was decided to appoint the Maharana

of Udaipur as Maharajpramukh of Greater Rajashthan. The office of Rajpramukh went to the Maharaja of Jaipur. The rulers of Jodhpur and Kotah were to be Senior Uprajpramukhs and those of Bundi and Dungarpur to be Junior Uprajpramukhs.

The last step taken towards completing the process of the unification of Rajputana states was to merge the Matsya Union with Greater Rajasthan. As there was difference of opinion about the future of Bharatpur and Dholpur, it was agreed to hold a referendum at a later date to ascertain whether a majority of the people wished to continue in Rajasthan or to go with the neighbouring province of U.P. A committee consisting of Sbankar Rao Deo, R.K. Sidhwa and Prabhu Dayal Himmatsingka, was appointed to report on the trends of public opinion. In accordance with the report submitted by them, Bharatpur and Dholpur continued to remain with Rajasthan.

### Sirohi

Only the fate of one Rajputana state remained yet to be settled. That was Sirohi, situated on the border of Gujarat. Suggestions had been made to Sardar Patel that certain states of Rajputana where large sections of population spoke Gujarati should be transferred to Western India and Gujarat States Agency. These states were : Sirohi, Palanpur, Danta, Idar, Vijayanagar, Dungarpur, Banswara and Jhabua. After discussions with the Regional Commissioner and the local Praja Mandal leaders, it was decided to transfer only Palanpur, Danta, Idar and Vijaynagar to Western India and Gujarat States Agency. This was done in February, 1948. Subsequently, Sirohi was also transferred to the Western India and Gujarat States Agency.

The state of Sirohi in which falls Mount Abu had not

been very fortunate in its rulers for some decades. Happenings in the state had often found prominent place in the British Indian Press. In the earlier years of the present century, succession to the Gaddi had throughout been a matter of dispute. The ruler's favouritism and partisan outlook brought in outsiders in state service in ever larger numbers.

*Apart from this, some difference of opinion existed as to the future of Sirohi. Gujaratis who thought that traditionally and historically, Mount Abu had been associated with Gujarati culture, demanded that the entire state should be merged with Bombay. There is no doubt that culturally the state was more closely connected with Gujarat than with Rajasthan. But the people of Rajasthan thought otherwise. Nearly all the rulers of Rajputana had their palaces in Mt. Abu, the only hill station in that region. When the people of Sirohi were consulted, they were also found divided in their views. Eventually, the state had to be divided, Abu Road and Dilwara Tehsils going with Bombay and the rest of the state with Rajasthan. This completed the process of consolidation and unification of the Rajputana states. The new union, called Rajasthan, was the biggest of all the states unions formed so far.*

### **Travancore-Cochin Union**

The states of Travancore and Cochin situated in the deep south were known for the progressive outlook of their people. For years the percentage of literacy in these states had been the highest in India.

Reference has been made earlier to the first reaction of the Dewan of Travancore, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer to the Viceroy's statement of June 3, 1947. He had expressed himself in favour of independence for Travancore. This view

was never shared by the people of the state. Only a few months later when as a result of his talks with the Viceroy and representatives of the States Ministry, Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer had started having second thoughts on the question of accession, the Maharaja of Travancore was patriotic enough to send telegraphically his consent to sign the Instrument of Accession.

As for Cochin, there was never any trouble as regards the accession of that state to India. The Maharaja had already issued a statement favouring not only accession to India and offering responsible government to his people but also, in a way, to merge his state with the future Malayalam-speaking province. In spite of the fact that the relations between Travancore and Cochin were far from cordial, the consensus of opinion among the people of the two states favoured integration of the two territories. Once the wish was expressed, the Ministry of States started tackling the job. The difficulties were innumerable, partly sentimental based on tradition and partly economic and geographical. Not the least important of these difficulties was the demand of the Tamil-speaking minority of Travancore in favour of joining the Madras State.

It must be said to the credit of V.P. Menon and his colleagues of the Ministry of States that by tactful handling and forbearance they were able to get over all the problems and make the merger of these two states a reality. Menon left the question of Aikya Kerala untouched, assuring that the question of the unification of all the Malayalam speaking areas was bound to be taken up at a later date.

In July, 1949, the Travancore-Cochin Union was inaugurated with the Maharaja of Travancore as its Rajpramukh and Trivandrum as its capital.

The process of grouping and unification soon exhausted itself, for there were a number of states which did not offer themselves to this treatment. These were too small to be viable units of administration and since they were islands surrounded by provincial territories, they could not be grouped with other states. Examples of such states were Rampur and Banaras in U.P.; Pudukottai in Madras, Cooch Bihar in West Bengal and a few others. All these states were merged with contiguous provinces to the satisfaction of the states people and without much opposition from their rulers.

The only categories of states still left out were those which called for a yet different kind of treatment and which had to be dealt with singly. Mysore was foremost among such states. It presented no difficulty. The Maharaja readily agreed to transfer all power to the elected Assembly and concede responsible government and become himself the constitutional head of the state.

There was a body of public opinion which favoured the unification of Mysore state and the Kannada-speaking people outside it. But the people of Mysore state were divided on this issue. Probably a majority of them were keen that Mysore should retain its identity. Though the argument continued to be carried on publicly for months in the Press as well as from the platform, the States Ministry ultimately persuaded the Mysore Congress leaders in favour of combining with Kannada-speaking districts of Bombay and Madras States to form eventually one unified Kannada-speaking State. It is worth noting however, that in all cases it were the princely states which merged with other territories but in this case it is certain districts of British Indian provinces which were keen to merge with Mysore. Mysore was thus the only state in India to have continued

intact as before, unscathed by post-Independence political developments, except, of course, the accretion to it of British Indian territory falling in Bombay and Madras presidencies.

### Case of Baroda

If things had not gone awry, a similar treatment would have been meted out to Hyderabad and with appropriate alterations to Baroda, Leaving Hyderabad alone, let us here trace the developments in Baroda. The story of the merger of this state has been made more interesting than it need have been by the antics of its ruler. Maharaja Pratap Singh of Baroda was such a wastrel that he was looked upon as a spend-thrift even from princely standards. Within a few years of his rule he managed to waste 8 crores of rupees in India and abroad. He was surrounded by undesirable friends and advisers who not only abetted his sins but egged him to commit them. On top of that the Maharaja was fickle-minded so that he could not take a decision, and having taken one could not stick to it.

Menon visited the state for a discussion with the Maharaja, but he was hardly out of Baroda when the Maharaja changed his mind about whatever had been settled between him and the State Ministry's representative. This brought the Sardar himself on the scene. Sardar Patel advised the Maharaja to agree to merger with Bombay, for the ruler could be hardly trusted to behave himself even as a constitutional head if Baroda were to be a separate state. Earlier he had gone back on his promises to give all powers to his Prime Minister, Dr. Jivaraj Mehta and his colleagues. While the Sardar was in Baroda, the Maharaja was amenable and he agreed to abide by the advice of the Minister for States.

As soon as Sardar Patel was back in Delhi, the



Maharaja again backed out. This put the Sardar in a firmer position, for he knew how to deal with habitual defaulters. The net result was the merger of Baroda with Bombay.

In the east, there was the sprawling state of Manipur, which for strategic reasons had to be declared a Union Territory, a status which it still enjoys. The state of Tripura in West Bengal was treated on the same footing.

### Bhopal

Bhopal had acceded to the Indian Dominion in August, 1947. Having once done so, the Nawab gave up his former stiffness and abandoned for ever his dream to retain Bhopal as a separate entity. His attitude now changed and he can be said to have made genuine efforts to reconcile himself to the new situation. Seeing that reforms in the state were inevitable, he entered into negotiations with the state Praja Mandal and agreed to constitute a ministry with popular leaders in April, 1948.

Unfortunately for the Nawab, this step, good in itself, was taken too late. The people had meanwhile gone a bit ahead and had started demanding the merger of Bhopal with the Madhya Bharat Union. The demand was followed by an agitation. Apprehending trouble the Nawab sought Sardar Patel's advice. As a result of talks with Patel's emissary, V. P. Menon, the Nawab persuaded the ministry to resign and took over the administration of the state in his own hands. After about a year, the state was taken over by the State Ministry as a Chief Commissioner's province in June, 1949. On account of the peculiar position of the Muslim minority in Bhopal, the Government of India did not mind giving some more time to the people of the state to manage their affairs with a view to adjusting themselves to the changed situation.

In 1957 when the boundaries of the States were re-

organised as a result of the recommendations of the State Reorganisation Commission, Bhopal too was merged, along with Madhya Bharat Union, with Madhya Pradesh.

In this way within less than two years Sardar Patel was able to accomplish the task of political consolidation of India. It is a task which must be reckoned as one of the most difficult in India's history. Five hundred and odd states of differing sizes and complexion were integrated within the Indian Union. They were all democratised and politically and constitutionally put on the same footing as the rest of the country. It redounds to Sardar Patel's credit that he achieved this without shedding a drop of blood and without firing a bullet. He was able to persuade the princes to surrender their powers and privileges voluntarily.

Indian and foreign writers have described the successful integration of the Indian states into the Union as the world's biggest revolution. The only thing comparable to it in world's history is the unification of Germany accomplished by Prince Bismarck in the latter half of the 19th century. Though the opportunities which freedom ushered in had created a favourable atmosphere for such a change, yet the magnitude and complexities of the task were staggering. The speed and smoothness with which it was ultimately accomplished must in the ultimate analysis be attributed to the shrewdness, tact and wise leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who conducted these operations personally at every stage.

The developments following the integration of the states bequeathed a host of problems like the integration of services, the delimitation of boundaries in some cases, their acclimatisation to the new environments, etc. All these problems were tough and delicate. Grouping of

scores of administrations belonging to various levels of political development and having different traditions of rule was no easy task, even if administratively they were grouped together

The integration of different services and giving a fair deal to all the employees of erstwhile states was a problem which took more than 10 years to solve. Perhaps more important than this was the problem of internal integration of the different units which had now been grouped together. There were regional differences which often brought to surface rivalries making the task of administration difficult and embarrassing. There were also dynastic pulls, straining people's loyalties

The long purses with which retired princes had been gifted put another spoke in the wheel of the administration, for not a few of these former rulers felt that they had been tricked out of their position of privilege

As long as Sardar Patel lived, he gave the best of thought to all these problems. Even after him the Ministry of State continued to deal with them in the light of the guidance left by the Sardar.

It was only in 1955 that the Ministry of States was wound up, though even at that time problems continued to crop up. On the abolition of this Ministry, these problems were naturally entrusted to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

## The Three Stragglers

We have seen that by August 15, 1947, all the states falling within the Indian territory had signed the Instrument of Accession, with the exception of Hyderabad, Kashmir and Junagadh. While Kashmir and Hyderabad had rejected the Instrument of Accession both on behalf of India and Pakistan, Junagadh chose to accede to Pakistan. The ruler of Junagadh was a Muslim and over 80% of the population of the state were Hindus. Junagadh is situated in the south-east of Kathiawad, bounded almost entirely by other Indian states all of which had acceded to India, except in the south and south-west where it bordered on the Arabian Sea. The total population of the state was a little less than 7 lakhs. The state was not an integral block of territory. It had several territorial enclaves which fell in the states of Gondal, Bhavnager and Nawanagar, and similarly several chunks of the Indian Dominion were interlocked with Junagadh territory so that access to these areas was only possible through Junagadh. Junagadh had also the distinction of having important Hindu and Jain religious shrines which attracted a large number of pilgrims from all over India. Its system of communications, railways, post and telegraphs, was an integral part of the Indian system.

Sir Shih Nawaz Bhutto, the new Dewan of Junagadh had announced the accession of Junagadh to Pakistan on behalf of the Nawab on 15th August, 1947. It was evidently the result of secret negotiations which had gone on for some time between the Nawab of Junagadh and his Dewan on the one side and the Dewan and Jinnah on the other. This unexpected announcement took the Government of India by surprise and sent a wave of anger throughout Kathiawad. The Government of India took up the question at once with Junagadh authorities and the Government of Pakistan. V. P. Menon was immediately sent to Rajkot by Sardar Patel for getting the wrong decision revised. In his talks, the Dewan of Junagadh admitted that he had committed a mistake by not approaching the Government of India before finally announcing the accession of Junagadh to Pakistan. He also admitted that the vast majority of the people of the state were for joining the Indian Dominion.\*

While itself a feuditary of Baroda, Junagadh received tributes from two minor territories which fell within its borders—Mangrol and Babariawad. Both of the petty estates had acceded to India. The Nawab of Junagadh, who had throughout been of two minds, had kept on wavering between India and Pakistan for weeks. The wishes and clear verdict of his people in favour of India did not influence him and his Chief Minister, Shah Nawaz Bhutto. It was also known that Jinnah was doing all that he could to persuade the Nawab to accede to Pakistan.\*\* Having acceded to Pakistan, the Nawab also prevailed upon the Sheikh of Mangrol to renounce his territory's accession to India, which the Sheikh did. As the Nawab did not meet with similar success in case of Babariawad, he sent Junagadh troops

\* 'The story of the Integration of the Indian States' Page 127

\*\* The story of Jinnah's interest in the accession of Junagadh to Pakistan is given by Leonard Mosley who says that Jinnah wanted its accession more as a "pawn" than as part of Pakistan territory Page 183

there in order to persuade the ruler to renounce his accession to India.

The Junagadh State Praja Mandal and the All-India States People's Conference soon after launched a powerful drive against the move of the Junagadh Durbar to accede to Pakistan. They organised public opinion against Junagadh's accession to Pakistan and pleaded for the state acceding to the Indian Dominion. Leaders of the AISPC, U.N. Dhebar, Balwantray Mehta, Sanwalidas Gandhi and Rasikbhai Parikh met V.P. Menon in Bombay and told him emphatically that the Junagadh issue was a most vital one and that the Government of India had not done enough to have the Nawab's decision revised. These leaders told Menon that the people of Junagadh and neighbouring states were desperate and that they might take the law into their own hands and organise a march on Junagadh, unless the Government assured them of suitable and effective action.

Meanwhile matters had been further complicated by the Sheikh of Mangrol retracting his accession to India in the course of a letter written under pressure from the Junagadh Nawab. But as the Mangrol accession had already been accepted by the Governnor-General, no notice was taken of the Sheikh's letter. On the other hand Babariawad which consisted of just 51 villages and had administratively formed part of Junagadh, asserted its right to accede directly to India. The Government of India accepted its accession. On hearing it, Junagadh sent its troops to Babariabad and it was feared that the situation might deteriorate if these developments were not stopped in time.

On 24th September, the Government of India decided to send a Brigade for the protection of this small state which had acceded to the Indian Union. Sardar Patel justified the despatch of troops to Babariawad and refused to

withdraw them on the plea that Junagadh had committed an act of aggression

Another one month was taken by protracted negotiations between India and Pakistan on the one hand and between representatives of the Government of India and the Nawab of Junagadh on the other. As no straight replies were coming from Karachi which was merely playing for time, Sardar Patel ordered the occupation of Mangrol, Babariawad and Manavadar where the Khan was reported to be harassing his people. The administration of these territories was taken over by the Government of India. On account of these unsettled conditions, the food situation in Junagadh had deteriorated and this introduced a new element in a situation already complicated

Realising that things had not gone according to his plan, the Nawab of Junagadh suddenly lost his nerve and flew to Karachi along with members of his family towards the end of October.\* Subsequently, the Sheikh of Mangrol and the Khan of Manavadar also went away to Pakistan. The plight to which the former rulers and the people of Junagadh had been reduced by the Nawab's wrong decision is graphically described in a letter which Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto, the Dewan wrote to Jinnah on October, 27. In his letter he said: "Our principal sources of revenue, railways and customs, have gone to the bottom. Food situation is terribly embarrassing though Pakistan has come to our

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\* This is how L. M. Mistry describes the incident

"The Nawab had already fled to Pakistan in his private plane. He crammed aboard as many of his dogs as he could, plus his four wives. One of them discovered, at the last moment that she had left her child behind in the palace and asked the Nawab to wait while she fetched her. The moment she left the airfield, the Nawab loaded in two more dogs and took off without his wife. He had with him sufficient of the family jewels to ensure the future comfort of himself and his family, but otherwise he had left everything."

rescue with a generous allotment of foodgrains. There has been harsh treatment of Muslims travelling on Kathiawad railway lines, who have been subjected to several kinds of hardships and humiliations. Added to this, His Highness and the royal family have had to leave because our secret service gave us information in advance of serious consequences to their presence and safety. Though immediately after accession, His Highness and myself received hundreds of messages chiefly from Muslims congratulating us on the decision, today our brethren are indifferent and cold. Muslims of Kathiawad seem to have lost all enthusiasm for Pakistan."\*

On November 8, the Dewan of Junagadh invited the Government of India to assume responsibility for the administration of the State. In compliance with this request, an officer of the State's Ministry was sent and the administration of the State was taken over by the Union Government. Three months later, in February 1948, the Junagadh accession issue was submitted to a plebiscite in accordance with an earlier decision. It resulted in an overwhelming majority of the people voting in favour of India. According to the wishes of the people, Junagadh was later merged with the newly created Saurashtra Union.

The part which the Junagadh State Praja Mandal and the leaders of the All-India States People's Conference played in keeping up the morale of the people of Junagadh, maintaining law and order there and keeping them solidly behind the demand for accession to India, was indeed memorable. Their quiet and solid work did much to smoothen the Indian Dominion's action in sending troops to the State and making the protracted process wholly democratic from the beginning to the end.

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\* "The Story of Integration of the Indian states"—page 136.



## HYDERABAD

The problem that Hyderabad posed was far more formidable than that of Junagadh. Firstly, Hyderabad was India's premier state, as large in size as France. Out of its population of 17 million, Muslims counted for only 14%. The Nizam had dreams of becoming a sovereign ruler of an independent kingdom. In these designs, he was backed by militant Muslim organisations like the Ittihad e Musalmin which had its own troops known as Razakars.

Being far removed from and having no geographical contiguity with that dominion, the Nizam could not accede to Pakistan. As he did not want to accede to India, he entered into a Standstill Agreement with India for a year, surrendering for that period control over defence, communications and external affairs to the Indian Dominion. At this time the Nizam appointed Mir Laik Ali as Prime Minister in place of the Nawab of Chhatari, because the latter favoured Hyderabad's accession to India whereas Laik Ali leaned heavily in favour of Pakistan. It was apparently on Laik Ali's advice that the Nizam gave a loan to Pakistan and issued an ordinance relating to currency arrangements which were calculated to be discriminatory against India.

The Razakars already known for their communal frenzy and separatist ideology now grew more militant and started harassing and even attacking Hindus. Their intimidation and oppression led to lakhs of Hindu subjects of Hyderabad flee the state in search of security. Inside Hyderabad the Razakars raised the cry of war. Besides marching in military formations in the capital of the state and other towns they began to harass the Hindus in the countryside also. Their object, it was clear, was to intimidate the non-Muslim population with a view to forcing them to leave the State. Soon there was an end to the rule of law and distur-

bances began occurring all over the State. The Razakars went to the limit of holding up trains passing through Hyderabad territory and looting passengers. Even Indian troops along the border were not immune from these attacks. According to Prime Minister's statement in the Constituent Assembly, they had made as many as 100 raids into Indian territory.

Side by side with this activity of the Razakars, feverish attempts were being made by the Nizam Government to buy arms and military equipment from abroad. With Karachi's connivance began gun-running of military equipment by air to Hyderabad. A British subject, Cotton was caught red-handed doing so.

The reply of the Indian Government to this reign of terror was economic blockade of Hyderabad. All appeals to the Nizam to control the Razakars and restore peace and order were ignored. The Nizam's only reply to these appeals was his request to the Security Council of the United Nations to settle the dispute between Hyderabad and India. This request was naturally opposed by India on the ground that Hyderabad constituted a part of the Indian Dominion.

Meanwhile public temper in India had reached a dangerous pitch on account of Razakars' ever-increasing excesses. The Government had to decide to act. It issued an ultimatum to the Hyderabad Government to stop the mischief and put a curb on the activities of the Razakars. As the ultimatum was not heeded, on its expiry on September 13, 1948, Indian troops converged on Hyderabad on three sides. This was the 'police action' of the Government of India. There was hardly any resistance worth the name. The 'police action' ended within four days. On the

17th September, the state forces laid down arms and surrendered unconditionally. This marked the liberation and subsequent democratisation of the Hyderabad state.

After the state's administration was taken over, it was put under a Military Governor for some time. It was given the status of a state within the Indian Union, with the Nizam as its Rajpramukh.

## KASHMIR

Like the rulers of Junagadh and Hyderabad, Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir was also unable to make up his mind on the question of accession. All efforts on the part of Indian leaders and Lord Mountbatten to persuade him to take a decision one way or the other proved abortive. On August 14 Kashmir signed a Standstill Agreement with Pakistan. The Maharaja was hoping that he would be able to have Kashmir accepted as an independent State by India and Pakistan and possibly by other powers also.

When the negotiations between the Indian Government and the Kashmir ruler were going on after the refusal of the latter to sign the Instrument of Accession it appeared that Maharaja Hari Singh was keen to have the best of both the worlds and wanted to have friendly relations with both India and Pakistan. He was anxious to have an independent Kashmir with himself as its king. The popular organisation of the state, the Jammu and Kashmir Political Conference had been placed under a ban and its leaders headed by Sheikh Abdullah were imprisoned. The negotiations though never encouraging lingered on, without reaching the breaking point.

Ram Chandra Kak, the Prime Minister of the state who was responsible for advising the ruler in favour of independence had been removed from office. His place was

taken first by Maj. General Janak Singh and two months later by Mehar Chand Mahajan who was known to be in favour of Kashmir's accession to India. He had started the process of softening the ruler when all of a sudden explosive developments took place which compelled the Maharaja to sue for accession to India. These developments were the tribal raids from across the North-west Frontier Province through Muzaffarabad. The tribal hordes swept everything in their way upto Baramullah. They set the town on fire and looted the population irrespective of religious considerations.

By the end of October, the fact of large-scale invasion of Kashmir, evidently with the connivance of Pakistan, came to be known to the state Government in Srinagar. Its forces were unable to stem the tide of what was a well planned invasion. So it begged the Indian Government to come to their rescue and offered in return to accede to India. After a hurried Cabinet decision, Indian troops were flown to Kashmir. A day's delay would have seen the raiders in occupation of the Kashmir airfield. The first contingent of Indian troops was able to land just in time to throw the raiders back though at considerable loss of life. A major part of the valley was soon cleared of the raiders.

Nehru referred the question of aggression on India through Pakistani territory to the United Nations and there the question still rests. Just at a time when our forces could have cleared the raiders from the whole of the Jammu & Kashmir territory, we agreed on ceasefire at the instance of impartial observers, though it was greatly to India's disadvantage.

Civil administration was soon restored in Kashmir state and it was given a special status among the States of India. A popular Government was installed with Sheikh Abdullah as Prime Minister. Like other States, the whole of its

governmental machinery was democratised and modernised. Except for a few formal provisions which conferred on Kashmir a kind of special status under Article 372 of the Indian Constitution, the state was brought into line with other States of India in the matter of constitutional requirements, form of government and the holding of elections.

## An Assessment of AISPC

There is a tendency to ascribe the smooth merger of the Indian states leading to the consolidation of the princely territories with the democratically governed provinces to certain chance happenings which Sardar Patel's shrewdness and wise leadership turned to good advantage in favour of national integration. No one can deny Patel's unique contribution in accomplishing this task, but it should not be forgotten that one of the sources of his strength was the AISPC and the confidence his leadership inspired among its workers and leaders all over the country. Those who have first-hand knowledge of the working of the All India States People's Conference before Independence and the role of its leaders and workers immediately after freedom when Sardar Patel started tackling the gigantic task of national consolidation, can have no hesitation in acknowledging the valuable contribution the Conference made to the successful completion of this task.

The most striking feature of this achievement is that it was accomplished in a perfectly democratic way without firing a bullet and without shedding a drop of blood. Credit for it would no doubt be given to some of the princes as well who saw the signs of the times and responding to Sardar

Patel's patriotic move, agreed to align themselves with the forces of democracy. It is true that their sense of patriotism made this operation painless, but no one can deny that the very atmosphere which changed princely attitudes so abruptly was created by people's incessant efforts. Can it be forgotten that only in January, 1947 the Chamber of Princes had protested through its Chancellor against the objectives of the Constituent Assembly because the princes did not accept the view that "the Republic would derive its powers and authority from the people"

Even when the merger of certain states was agreed to in principle, the actual settlement of the issue and the selection of one alternative out of many was facilitated by the stand which the people's representatives in the said states took up. There were occasions when on account of their commitments to the rulers, the States Ministry could not have forced the princes to opt for the only correct alternative, namely, voluntary surrender of their ruling powers and privileges. Here also, the Praja Mandals and the popular movements came in like what philosophers call *deus ex machina* to bring about the desired result. The whole process of states merger and the consolidation of their territories with the former provinces was done by the Ministry of States in close collaboration and with active assistance of the workers of the States People's Conference.

Let us first take up the activities of the AISPC before the last war, that is to say, from 1927 to 1940. The commendable work which this organisation did in organising public opinion in the states and outside them in favour of responsible government in states is too well known to need reiteration. Apart from guiding the states people and helping them in their hour of need, the AISPC launched a systematic programme for educating enlightened opinion in India

ment had accepted in the matter of commerce, trade and communications but not in the political and coonstitutional spheres. The continued advocacy by the AISPC of this viewpoint won for it many supporters from among non-Congress Indian leaders as also a number of eminent Englishmen. At a time when a reference to the treaties was considered an adequate plea to reject any demand for liberalisation of the administrative machinery in the states, it redounds to the credit of the AISPC to have torn that veil and put the treaties in their proper historical perspective. By the middle of 1939, the myth of the treaties had exploded. Lord Winterton, Under-Secretary of State for India had to admit that the provisions of the old treaties could not for all times be adduced as a sufficient argument to deny responsible government to the people of the states.

After the freedom when Sardar Patel started tackling the problem of the states, the help offered by the AISPC came handy whenever the officers of the States Ministry came up against difficulties, particularly when they were torn between their commitments to the princes and the duty to their subjects and the nation at large. The very move of grouping the states into unions was rendered possible by the dependable support of the Praja Mandals. When the first group of states was tackled in Eastern India it is the Praja Mandals which straightened things when negotiations with the rulers of states like Nilgiri and Dhenkanal in Orissa were in danger of getting bogged. In order to soften the rulers and bring them into line with the ideas of the States Ministry, the Praja Mandals either staged convincing demonstrations or by their activities posed a threat to the law and order situation in the states and in some cases set up parallel governments. The result was that the rulers were made to swerve from the wrong path and come to the right track. The union of the Deccan states which some of the rulers had



formed to safeguard their own interests foundered on the rock of public opinion organised by the Praja Mandals of those states. An accomplished fact could thus be undone only because the Praja Mandals unanimously resolved to favour those states' merger with Bombay. The same happened when the Kathiawad states were merged to form the union of Saurashtra. The difficult problem which Junagadh posed would have been far more hard to tackle but for the ready support of the Junagadh Praja Mandal. The referendum which eventually took place in Junagadh resulting in the merger of that state with Saurashtra was another victory of the state's Praja Mandal and its contribution to the unification of Kathiawad.

The States Ministry came up against another knotty problem while dealing with big states like Gwalior, Indore, etc. The Governor General, Lord Mountbatten had declared that no viable state would be coerced to merge itself with a neighbouring province or a union of states. This assurance was endorsed by Patel and the Ministry of States. When the Central India states were being tackled, Sardar Patel and his officials thought that the best course was to form one single union of all the states of that region, including Indore and Gwalior. However, in view of the Governor-General's assurance, the rulers of these states could not have been forced to prefer merger to separate existence; and they were actually inclined to prefer separate existence in the Indian Union. Here again, the help rendered by the Praja Mandals tilted the balance in favour of a single union, although even among public workers the feeling of loyalty to the Scindia and the Holkar was remarkably strong. Similarly, in dealing with other states which were either grouped to form unions or merged with neighbouring provinces or given any other treatment temporarily, one of the most valuable assets of the States Ministry was the organised strength of

the AISPC and its local units. This strength could always be used as a lever in favour of the best alternative in people's interest.

This point becomes clearer if we refer to the views expressed by V. P. Menon as Secretary, Ministry of States when he advised Sardar Patel to ask the princes to accede to India under three subjects only—that is, Defence, External Affairs and Communications. The Sardar was still in doubt. Menon felt, however, sure that no prince could refuse the accession proposal. He replied to his Minister: 'How can they refuse? Until now, the British protected each princely state from unrest. If there were political or communal agitations, the British saw to it that order was restored. But now the British are going. It is true that some of the bigger states can keep some sort of order through their own private armies. But if the people rise up and begin to demand their freedom—the right to be independent themselves, to join India—if popular agitation begins to threaten the rule and safety and even the lives of the Rulers, where can they look to for protection except to us?' \*

Perhaps a still more valuable service that the AISPC rendered was that it provided a safety valve to the state's people in their moments of despair and helplessness. The processes of administration, both executive and judicial, revolved round the princes and their favourites. Once one happened to find oneself on their wrong side, one was doomed. He had no tribunal of appeal from where he could expect justice or redress of his grievances. In such cases it is only the AISPC which heard the grievances and lent its public forum for taking up that cause. Even in cases where the people's cup of woes was full up to the brim, it is the AISPC whose support promised hope to the people and gave them some solace. By bringing such cases before the public

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\* The Last Days of the British Raj—p. 160

and thus focussing attention on them, the AISPC became a kind of unofficial court which inspired faith in the people and not unoften among the princes.

When the nature or volume of popular complaints and grievances so justified, the AISPC appointed unofficial enquiry committees to report on those complaints and ascertain people's demands. Perhaps the most important of such enquiry committees set up by the AISPC were the two committees established in 1935 to enquire into and to report on (a) the causes of the death of Sewa Singh Thikriwala, a leading Praja Mandal worker in Patiala Jail, and (b) conditions of the political prisoners in the Patiala jail. The report of the two enquiry committees was published in book-form under the title "The Indictment of Patiala". Though the Political Department and the Crown Representative did all that they could to shield the Maharaja of Patiala, the publication of the "Indictment" did have a salutary effect on the Maharaja and the Political Department. What is more important, this publication encouraged the states people in their fight against autocratic administrations in the states. It also infused a sense of purpose in the workers of the AISPC and the Praja Mandals affiliated to it.

The number of such enquiry committees set up by the AISPC for conducting probes into states administrations was more than a dozen. Among the more important of such committees were those appointed to report on affairs in Nawanagar, Mysore, Orissa states, Jhabua, Simla Hill States, Hyderabad, etc.

In compliance with a resolution of AISPC, a deputation of the states people was sent to England in 1928. The object was to inform British public opinion about the real state of affairs obtaining in princely territories inhabited by

more than 75 million people. It was also intended to place the case of the states people before the Butler Committee which had started its sittings in London. What the states subjects wanted was that the Indian princes should concede to them the ordinary rights of citizenship and constitutional liberties. Since every reforms act was shaped in England and enacted by the British Parliament, it was of the utmost importance that the support of British public opinion should be enlisted in favour of better and cleaner administration in Indian states, which had no representative institutions and were outside the purview of the legislative machinery operating in British India.

The deputation consisting of Ramchandra Rao, G. R. Abhyankar, A. D. Shet, and P. L. Chudgar met several parliamentarians and public men in England. It prepared a statement for submission to the Butler Committee. Copies of it were circulated among members of Parliament and eminent public men in England. The statement contained the case for the Indian states people. This statement was received well and commented favourably by a section of the British press, notably by the *Manchester Guardian* and the *New Leader*. On the basis of this statement, Lord Olivier raised a debate in the House of Lords and it also featured in several interpellations in the House of Commons.

The achievements of the AISPC's deputation in England can be best appreciated by knowing how it influenced public opinion there through interviews with public men, by encouraging debates and discourses on Indian affairs and by contributing letters and articles to the press. Lord Olivier in the course of his speech in the House of Lords referred to the question of Indian states. The debate was raised by him after the receipt of the deputation's memorandum. Lord Olivier said :

"Most, if not all of these Principalities are arbitrary and absolute Governments. Every thing depends upon the autocratic will of the Sovereign. With regard to the laws, with regard to the administration of revenues, with regard to the appointment of justices and with regard to many matters which in our own Constitution have been taken out of the power of the Sovereign, those matters are there absolutely within the power of the Sovereign, and are liable and sometimes subject to abuse. That is a position which is very keenly recognised by a great number of the Indian subjects of those Princes, and we have recently had in England a Deputation headed by Ramchandra Rao, a very distinguished Indian servant, which put forward in a temperate manner some of the criticisms which they have to make upon the present Constitutions of Indian States which render misgovernment always possible and sometimes inevitable. When you are reconstituting the whole framework of Indian Government and are considering the question how far the Government of the Indian states can be fitted into that framework, I think it will be found impossible to disregard the question as to whether the autocratic power of the Princes should not in some degree be restricted and delegated. The question will rise, and I do not express any opinion upon it myself."

In the House of Commons many a question hour was enlivened by interpellations on Indian states and conditions obtaining therein. How far the deputationists succeeded in interesting Liberal and Labour Party Members in the states people's rights would be clear from the following questions and answers :—

Mr. Rennie Smith (for Mr. Wallhead) asked the Under-Secretary of State for India whether he will inform the House of the nature of the responsibility of the Paramount

Power for the good government of the Indian states and the conditions of intervention by the Paramount Power in the internal administration of the states; and whether machinery exists in any of the states whereby grievances of the peoples of a state may be made known by them to the Paramount Power or whereby, in case of necessity, they may invoke intervention to obtain the redress of such grievances.

*Answer*—**EARL WINTERTON** : "As regards the first part of the question I would refer the Hon. Member to the explanation of the rights and duties of the Paramount Power given in the letter from the Viceroy to His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad of the 27th March 1926, of which a copy was included in the papers presented to Parliament at the time (*Command Paper No. 2621 of 1926*). As regards the second part, the Political Officers appointed to the various states or groups of states are responsible for keeping the Paramount Power supplied with whatever local information is necessary for the proper discharge of its functions."

*Question* : **MR. THURTTLES** : "Are we to understand from that answer that a citizen of one of these states has the right to approach the Political Officer with a grievance which he may have against the ruler of that state?"

*Answer* : **EARL WINTERTON** : "It is really impossible within the limits of an answer to a Parliamentary question to explain exactly what the position is. It is a matter of the highest importance, as it affects the relations of the Crown with these states. If the Hon. Gentleman wants information on a specific point, he must put a question down. If he will read this letter from the Late Viceroy to which I have referred, he will find the case stated there."

**MR. WELLCOCK** asked the Under-Secretary of State

for India if it is the intention of His Majesty's Government or the Government of India to grant the same facilities to the subjects in the Indian states as to their princes to express the views on the future relations of the Indian States with British India.

*Answer* : EARL WINTERTON : "The question of the relations between British India and the Indian states is primarily a constitutional question and can only be discussed between the duly constituted Governments concerned. But I have no doubt that any state subjects who wish to express views on this matter will find means to make them known."

*Question* : COLONEL WEDGWOOD : "Cannot the Government make representations to this committee that the people themselves are most interested in the Report of this Committee ?

*Answer* : EARL WINTERTON : "It is too long a question to go into in reply to a supplementary question, but I cannot accept the premise of the right Hon. and gallant Gentleman that these people have any right to make their case known to this Committee. In any case, the procedure, as the right Hon. and gallant Gentleman, from his own administrative experience, must be well aware, is always a matter for the chairman of the committee."

*Question* : MR. WELLCOCK : Have not these 80,000,000 people a right to make their position known ?

*Answer* : EARL WINTERTON : "They can make their position known by writing to the newspapers, by having political meetings, and in various other ways. That is a question quite distinct from whether or not they should be able to give evidence before this Commission."

As for press propaganda, the most notable are the editorial comments which the *London Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* published in their columns. We shall quote here only one comment. Under the caption "Case for the Peoples", the *Guardian* while referring to the AISPC's memorandum, wrote :

"The memorandum argues that the use of the word "States" in the terms of reference should apply to the peoples as well as the rulers, and that the peoples are affected equally with, if not more vitally than, the princes. The deputation contends that the present relations of the Paramount Power with rulers of the states cannot be modified without the consent of the peoples.

"Sir Leslie Scot, the memorandum continues, has apparently contended that the Paramount Power should cease to intervene between the princes and their subjects. Under present conditions a subject of a state can be put into prison under the orders of a ruler without any legal way of getting him out. Sometimes release has been secured through diplomatic action of the Government of India. In a number of Cases property has been confiscated by the rulers. The only present remedy is to appeal to the Government of India. If the Paramount Power desists from taking remedial action the subjects will be entirely at the mercy of their rulers.

"Under the treaties upon which the princes rely, and by the development of political usage, they have undertaken definite obligations, including continued good government and the promotion of the happiness and welfare of their people. The princes who complain of encroachments on the part of the Paramount Power have themselves failed to discharge their own responsibilities to their people. In



olden days the remedy available to the people suffering oppression in a state without constitutional liberties was open rebellion. The Paramount Power has taken away this right. The princes feel that in a conflict between the rulers and the ruled the Paramount Power is certain to side with them on the alleged ground of the preservation of peace and order. This has resulted in the neglect by the princes of their duty to their own people. There is no rule of law in the states, with a few exceptions. There is no liberty of personal property, association, public meeting, or the press. There is no independent judiciary.

"The deputation resists the view of the princes that their relations as established by the treaties are with the Crown of England and not with the Government of British India. It also asks for a thorough public enquiry into the adjustment of the financial and economic relations of British India and the states, and that the peoples should have an effective voice in these matters."

Such notes in England's leading newspapers were followed by a spate of letters to the Editor, some supporting the case of the states people and others refuting the points made out by the deputationists. It is needless to say that nearly all the letters supporting the princes emanated from their Ministers or ex-Ministers who happend to be in England at the time.

No less interesting were the news stories and Editorial notes published in the Continental Press about the activities of the deputationists. *La Jeune Republique*, a leading Republican Paper of Paris published an interesting interview with Prof. G. R. Abhyankar. Here is the English translation of the interview :

La Jeune—Republique

(Paris, January 19th, 1929)

"An Indian Professor tells us the political misery of the people of India bent under an archaic autocracy....

A robust looking man, past fifty, with a complexion of bronze and engaging features, which bespeak energy, an Indian Professor, he has come to Europe and made a point to visit the *Jeune—Republique* which he knows for its devotion to all ideas of justice, freedom and peace ..

He wishes to interest us in the Indian cause, that British India, where one can already decry a development towards political freedom; but especially in the cause of the Indian states, still bent under the crushing weight of a suspicious and avaricious autocracy.

We ask at once Prof. G. R. Abhyankar.

Q. What is the condition of the Indian States ?

A. The Indian States, replies Prof. G. R. Abhyankar, are in a desperate condition, as regards recognition of political rights; in an altogether backward condition, viz. that of an absolute Monarchy, where no one possesses even the most elementary rights of citizenship; no security of property; no independent judiciary; no liberty of press or assembly; no form of representative government; and the revenues of the state are seized by their rulers.

Q. Does the British Government not interfere ?

A. It uses the Indian states for its own purposes. It has deprived the rulers of their military forces, but in return given them licence to rule the people in the most

autocratic manner. It does not interfere in the domestic affairs of the state.

Q. How do you explain that the people do not rebel against such autocracy and force the government to establish a constitutional regime ?

Sadly, our Professor replies :

A. The people have no means of turning to direct action. The Central Government has promised the Rulers protection both against invasion from without and revolution from within. Thus the people are powerless and suffering under the double despotism of its rulers and of the British.

We put al ast question to the Professor :

Q. What can other countries do for the Indian states ?

A. The League of Nations can certainly help us. The right of people to self determination is now-a-days recognised. We demand that the British Government should treat us as mandated territories and that it should enquire from time to time into the political and administrative conditions of our states. The moral pressure, which the members of the League of Nations could exert, would materially help to liberate the 78 million states' subjects which today still find themselves in a political servitude incompatible with civilization."

The delegation of the States People's Conference thus did a lot of valuable constructive work in England and the Continent. As a result of its educative campaign, many Britishers came to have an insight into the hardships and handicaps of the people living in the native states. Public opinion in Britain was considerably impressed by the genuineness of the states people's case and this fact was unmis-

takeably reflected in the India debates in Parliament and the views expressed by independent national and county newspapers of that country.

But the achievements of the AISPC in India were of far greater consequence in the sphere of propaganda. The Conference had an English weekly and several Hindi and other language journals of its own. Besides, as has been said earlier, it published a number of pamphlets and books relating to specific happenings in certain states and the general problem of ridding those territories of the autocratic rule of the princes. Of special significance was the willing cooperation which British Indian Press gave the states people's movement in publicising their cause. A majority of the papers published from British India were pro Congress and they looked upon the states people's movement as an organic part of the larger struggle for freedom. The AISPC, quite a few of whose active workers were journalists and Press correspondents, derived the maximum advantage from this source of strength and catered fully to those papers' hunger for news from the states.\*

It was, however, in moments of actual crisis in the states that leaders of the AISPC came out openly to bear the brunt of the rulers' wrath. Wherever a state government committed atrocities on its people provoking them to resort to satyagraha, the State People's Conference was always ready to become the spearhead of resistance. But for its help no satyagraha could have been staged in any of the states. Whether it was Patiala, Loharu, or petty Dujana in Punjab or Alwar and apparently progressive Jaipur, Jodhpur and Bikaner in Rajasthan, or "enlightened" Mysore or

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\* The 'Janmabhoomi', which did yeoman service to the cause of the states people had correspondents practically in all important states. Its office in Bombay was a rendezvous for AISPC workers from all over India.

Travancore in the far south, or remote Jhabua in the parched plains of Central India or petty principalities like Dhāmī tucked up in the Himalayan fastnesses around Simla, the resistance movement was invariably supported, if not actually conducted, by the All India States People's Conference. It willingly faced all hazards and infused courage in the hearts of the local people. Its leaders were arrested and clamped in medieval prisons, but they suffered all this to keep the struggle going and to turn every isolated happening into an all-India question.

The educative programme of the AISPC and the active help and guidance it rendered whenever the subjects of a prince were in distress, conferred on the Conference a status in states people's eyes parallel to that of the Congress in British India. For twenty years, 1927 to 1947, the Conference was recognised by the people and no less by the princes even if they did not say it publicly, as the accredited organisation of the states people. This fact proved to be a great asset during the years of the struggle, but after it when Sardar Patel's plans put boundaries of the states into the crucible, this organisation was called upon to play a still more important role.

About the facts of integration much has been said elsewhere. Let it be added here that with the merger of the states with neighbouring provinces or the formation of separate unions, a constitutional problem had cropped up which could be solved only with the help of the AISPC. As soon as a state joined the process of democratisation, its people had to be represented in India's Constituent Assembly and the local ad-hoc assembly. As many of these territories had no representative institutions, their representatives had to be chosen by the Praja Mandals and the AISPC. In the case of Rajasthan, Saurashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Vindhya

Pradesh and Manipur even the first lot of popular Ministers had to be picked up from among the local workers of the States People's Conference. There could have been nothing more appropriate, and for the AISPC nothing more lucky, than to find the workers trained by it in the school of practical experience coming forward to shoulder the responsibility of manning the legislatures and the administration.

## Some Obiter Dicta

It is about 20 years that the princely states were consolidated politically and constitutionally, obliterating the distinction between the Provinces and what was known as Indian India. Since the pensioning off of the rulers and the merger of their states with the rest of India, the Indian Union has been gradually taking shape. The hundreds of territories, big and small, once ruled by autonomous Rajas and Nawabs have now become a thing of the past, known only to the older generation. Today it is only the memory of that past which lingers. Only political trends striking a discordant note or seeking to stress a point may now and then recall to one's mind the areas once under personal rule.

Looking back and recounting the events of the last quarter century one feels tempted to make some observations, not merely about the "ifs" of history but also about certain happenings which stand out and seem to point to conclusions which may have some relevance for the future. Even if it is looked upon as a purely academic exercise, it will have, one feels, enough historical justification for purposes of offering a few *obiter dicta*;

1—It is tempting to conjecture what would have happened if the required number of princes had signed the Instrument of Accession during 1936-39, enabling the British Government to bring into operation the federal part of the Government of India Act, 1935. If the princes had succeeded in getting out of their mental reservations and agreed to accede to the proposed Federal Union, the demand of the states' people and the political parties of British India that the princes should send elected rather than nominated representatives to the Federal Legislature would not have stood in the way of the Federation coming into being. If only the princes had put their signatures to the Instrument of Accession, the Viceroy would almost certainly have forced the issue and inaugurated the Indian Federation along with Provincial Autonomy or soon after, the dispute about the manner of states representatives' return to the Federal Legislature notwithstanding.

It is equally certain that within a year or two this dispute would have sorted out itself. The election of representatives would have been generally agreed to in principle by the princes, some of them like Mysore, Barod, and Gwalior had already expressed their readiness to do so.

Let us now try to imagine how things would have shaped if the Federation had come into being before the war broke out in 1939. It seems clear that such a development would have strengthened the position of the princely states and they would have been able to participate more effectively in constitution-making, both before the time and after the transfer of power. Not only that, they would also in that case have been able to bargain for themselves from a position of strength. According to Mosley\* Mountbatten described the princes as, 'a bunch of nitwits for not democratising their

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\* The Last Days of the British Raj, Page 153



administrations when they saw the power of the Congress rising and "for not joining the Indian Federation when they had the opportunity in 1935."

It is also possible that such a development might have imparted a certain element of mellowness to political trends in India and given them a new direction. It would, without doubt, have affected the rigid postures which the Congress and the Muslim League adopted in later years. It would not be altogether fantastic to imagine that with the softening of the rigid and uncompromising postures of the two political parties of India, the partition of the country would not have become inevitable. In sheer self-interest the princes would have pulled together in favour of a workable political solution of the communal problem which defied the Congress and the Muslim League.

For the fact that the princes failed to respond to Lord Linlithgow's sincere and earnest efforts to accede to the Federation, they must for all times bear the stigma of having acted unpatriotically and in a short-sighted manner. Though it is known that it was the officers of the Political Department who were largely responsible for misleading the princes and thus betraying the trust of the Crown Representative, yet the princes themselves cannot be absolved of blame for being selfish and gullible.

This charge of selfishness and short-sightedness was further confirmed in 1946-47 when the leading princes shut their eyes to the realities of the situation. Though some of them, notably Jaipur, Gwalior and Mysore had promised responsible government in 1946-47, they did not have the wisdom to implement this promise betimes. The best friend of the princes, Sir Conrad Corfield Political Adviser to the Crown Representative, had a similar feeling

as he left India in July, 1947. "Even at this late stage", he said, "the Rulers found it difficult to realise that they were being deserted by the Crown and left to make their peace with the new Dominions in circumstances in which complete power was being transferred to their political opponents. Had they listened to the Crown's past advice to constitutionalise their authority, to limit their private expenditure and to group themselves into viable units, they could have negotiated from strength."\*

✓ There is little doubt thus that their failure to win over their people by not transferring power into their hands and their blind reliance on the capacity of the Paramount Power to protect them, proved to be the undoing of the princes. Even as late as 1946-47 it was quite possible for good many princes to make their status, privileges and continuity impregnable if they had become constitutional Heads of their states before being called upon to sign the Instrument of Accession. ✓ Given full democratic rights, in most cases the people would not only have preferred their Maharajas to continue but would have fought for them. It could be said with a reasonable degree of certitude that in such circumstances the role of AISPC or for that matter any political party vis-a-vis the states would have been different. Far from helping the States Ministry as its unofficial vanguard, the AISPC would have turned themselves into real "body-guards" of their respective rulers.

2--If full responsible government had been established in some of the bigger viable states well before the transfer of power, the steam-roller of merger would not have moved with the devastating speed it did. At least a few of the states would have developed strong local loyalties which were

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\*Ibid, 175

likely to be buttressed by democracy, enlightened self-interest and the desire to perpetuate constitutional personal rule.

Let us take the case of Gwalior as a typical example. Maharaja Scindia happened to have so much backing and inspired so much of goodwill among his people that if he had become a constitutional Head of his state in 1946, as he had promised, the people of Gwalior would have seen to it that the state did not lose its identity and the Scindia remained its Head for life.\*

That this view is not far-fetched is also proved by the opposition which the protagonists of the unification of Karnataka had to encounter in Mysore. If, let us suppose for the sake of argument, Mysore had been given full responsible government earlier, it was least likely that the people of Mysore state would have agreed to withdraw their opposition and let the Kannada speaking districts of Bombay and Madras merge with it.

Even though full responsible government was late in coming and the unpleasant memories of the twelve-year old constitutional struggle were fresh in people's minds, a large section of Mysoreans opposed the proposal to merge the adjoining Kannada-speaking areas with it; and all this inspite of a strong, vehement and popular agitation waged for years for the unification of Karnataka. If the States Reorganisation Commission were not predisposed in favour of the creation of unified linguistic states, it had enough basis in the evidence adduced before it to recommend the continuity of Mysore State as it had existed and make some other provision for the Kannada-speaking districts of Bombay, Madras and Hyderabad. As long as the issue was constitutional reform and making Mysore as one of the con-

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\* At least two of Gwalior's top public leaders occupying responsible positions in 1960 attested to this fact to the writer in private conversation.

stituent States of the Indian Union, to a man the people of Mysore were behind the moves of the Centre, but when the question of reorganisation of States cropped up, old emotional considerations were jettisoned and there grew a body of opinion favouring the retention of Mysore State boundaries at the cost of the proposal for the unification of Karnataka. Says the S R C. in its Report -

"With the reorganisation of States becoming a live political issue, however, some differences of opinion have recently arisen about the territorial set up of the proposed Karnataka State. These differences relate principally to two matters, namely, the financial prospects of the Karnataka State and the desirability of integrating, in the proposed Karnataka State, the State of Mysore which claims to have a distinct administrative and cultural tradition. Since the Karnataka areas outside Mysore are regarded as under-developed, and are likely to have a financial deficit, there has grown up in the last two or three years opposition to the unification of Mysore with other Karnataka areas."\*

It was in the face of this swing in public opinion in favour of the continuance of Mysore state without any alteration in its boundaries that the State Government appointed a fact finding committee in February 1954. After sifting and sorting a good deal of material and going into details as regards economic development, land revenue system, salary structures of government employees, law and order situation etc, the committee recommended

that "the Kannada districts in Hyderabad and Bombay will have to be grouped into separate divisions under

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\* SCR Report, page 90

the administrative control of a Commissioner who should have extensive powers to take decisions and to implement them."\*

Who can feign surprise at this development, and who can fail to see that another few princely states, in similar circumstances, would have opposed merger with other areas in the same way as Mysore, irrespective of the so-called cultural and linguistic affinities? If that did not actually happen, the blame lies largely with the princes themselves who instead of authorising the accredited representatives of their people to negotiate with the States Ministry undertook to do so themselves or through their Dewans.

3—In the light of the happenings of the last 20 years it could be said that one of the draw-backs in our federal structure is that most of the States constituting the Union are too big in size. In the same proportion they are riddled with problems also. Largeness of size in many cases has also brought in the factor of great diversity in respect of resources of the States as a whole. The State of Uttar Pradesh, for example, with a population nearing 90 million and an area of 2,94,364 square KM and the newly-created State of Nagaland with a population of less than 4 lakhs and an area of 16,488 square KM, present a perplexing contrast. While it would be admitted that no one can help the smallness of Nagaland, the lumping together of a huge area into one State in the case of Uttar Pradesh remains inexplicable.

The great stress laid on unity and unification at the time of territorial consolidation after independence is responsible for this development. In the context of the overriding needs to integrate the princely states in as short a

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\* Report of the Fact Finding Committee, page 141

time as possible the phenomenon of the creation of large-size States is somewhat understandable. But what is not so understandable is the attitude of the States Reorganisation Commission which instead of rationalising the States structure in the Union rendered it in some cases still more untenable. In its keenness to apply the linguistic principle to reorganisation, the Commission committed the mistake of creating unwieldy States. It is not suggested that it did so without considering the pros and cons of the problem. In its discussions as reflected in the Report, it took into consideration all factors for and against the creation of small or wieldy States but while clinching the issue it rejected out of hand all arguments in favour of small States. How faulty the inferences of the Commission have been in this regard would be evident from a reference to the reasons which led it to favour the creation of bigger States as against smaller States. In paragraph 212 of the Report it is said that

'A closer link between the electorate and representatives may help to bring about a real unity of outlook and community of interest between the people and those charged with their government.'

This unexceptionable principle the Commission rejected on the following plea made in paragraph 241, which reads -

It may be doubted in the first place whether except in the Swiss Cantons it has been possible to realise the ideal of direct democracy anywhere. As regards the appreciation of local needs, the machinery of planning is intended to serve this purpose, and it is extremely unlikely that a small State will be able to finance on its own projects which as matters stand at present have no chance of being considered at the national level.

That the argument advanced in the above paragraph has not proved to be sound is now established by the fact that the machinery of planning has not in all cases succeeded in appreciating local needs. The general criticism of our Plans that they have spread the butter too thinly all over without caring for vertical growth also falsifies this hope of the S. R. C. As for the small States' inability to finance their projects which have no chance of being considered at the national level, the Chairman of the States Reorganisation Commission has himself rebutted this in his note on Himachal Pradesh. While pleading for a separate Himachal Pradesh and opposing its amalgamation with Punjab, Sir Fazl Ali has quoted in his note one of the earlier conclusions arrived at by the Commission itself as stated in paragraph 186, which says :-

"India's development plans may increasingly take the shape of a centrally-directed effort to locate and implement projects which are intended to give the highest return within the shortest periods, the benefits accruing to the country as a whole and not merely to any particular areas or regions in it. If the maximum advantage is to be derived from any such development plan or plans, the central planning authority must operate under minimum restrictions in its choice of methods and investment, and parochial tendencies within the Union should be discouraged."

To sum up, while pleading for smaller States, whose number in the Indian Union might well go beyond 30, it is not intended to criticise either the States Ministry or the States Reorganisation Commission. The simple truth is that the situation since 1947 has been changing fast so that postulates and axioms on the one hand and political expedients and ideals on the other, often got hope-

lessly mixed up. What in reality was an expedient often appeared as an immutable verity, and was accepted as such. The result was that certain postulates were mistaken for axioms.

Perhaps it is all in the game, when one deals with the affairs of a vast country like India. But what is required is that the leadership should be open to conviction and therefore willing to review the situation periodically and effect suitable adjustments accordingly.

In the light of these facts, it would be permissible to make two observations. Firstly, the principle of linguistic homogeneity does not mean that all areas or regions speaking one language should have been necessarily lumped together into one State. If economic, administrative and developmental needs so required, they might well have been split into two or more States with advantage. Secondly, the amalgamation of Saurashtra with bilingual Bombay and that of Madhya Bharat with the bigger Madhya Pradesh was neither necessary nor desirable.

4—Another question often raised relates to the place of the institution of monarchy in a democratic set-up. In our country's context it means whether in a Union of States of vast size and almost limitless diversity in the matter of historical tradition and cultural development, it would not have been advantageous to have constituent States both under governors and hereditary rulers as constitutional Heads. That such a development in India was feasible is beyond question. That it has not happened is a plain fact. What is interesting is to consider whether a combination of governors and princes as Heads of States would not have been a better arrangement.

Personal rule by a hereditary monarch has many



advantages, particularly in a democratic constitution when the people are vigilant and the powers and sphere of authority of the Head of a State are circumscribed and clearly specified. Such a Head of State, apart from being closer to the people and therefore more likeable to them, can also display greater initiative. In the performance of his duties he would have far more at stake than a nominated governor can have. Such an arrangement would have been possible if some of the bigger princely states had been allowed to continue with minor territorial adjustments where necessary.

Supposing the continuance of the hereditary rulers of States were looked upon as an irksome reminder of the past, it is for consideration whether retired princes would not have made better Heads of States in the Indian Union than the governors picked up from political life ; or whether a combination of governors and former princes as Heads of States even for a stipulated term would not have worked better. The various agreements and covenants signed with the princes on behalf of the Union Government clearly indicate that some such arrangement was in mind at the time not only of the princes, but also of Sardar Patel. Whatever the States Reorganisation Commission might have recommended, it is difficult to understand how the Union Government could back out of the commitment of having some Rajpramukhs (which is the same thing as governor) for life. The least that a student of recent history expects to know is whether any attempt was made to honour the commitment by offering any reasonable alternative to the princes who, as a result of re-organisation of States, were deprived of the office solemnly promised by the Union Government only a few years earlier. And when one sees how easy it was to do so, that is to say, to make a genuine effort to keep the plighted word without creating conditions incompatible with the people's welfare

and our national ideals, one cannot help feeling sorry for this lapse. No one can deny that some of the ex-Rulers as Governors would have inspired greater confidence and respect of the people than the political leaders appointed to that high, but largely ornamental, office.

#### 5—Indian States and Linlithgow

No connected account of constitutional reforms in Indian states leading ultimately to their unification and merger with the adjoining provinces would be complete without reference to the contribution which Lord Linlithgow as Viceroy and Governor General made to facilitate a solution of the problem. Any objective study of this question will establish the fact that, at least so far as the small and middle size states were concerned, Linlithgow laid the foundation of grouping not only by forcing this idea on the princes but by actually giving the experiment a start. During 1938-39 he lost no opportunity to stress the fact that it was not possible to solve the states problems without laying emphasis on the possibility and advisability of grouping. While inaugurating the session of the Chamber of Princes in March 1939, Linlithgow made the following significant observation :-

"In no case is the need for cooperation and combination more patent, more pronounced and more immediate than in the case of the smaller states. These states whose resources are so limited as virtually to preclude them individually from providing for the requirement of their people in accordance with modern standards, have indeed no other practical alternative before them. I would take this opportunity to impress upon the Rulers of such states, with all the emphasis at my command, the wisdom of taking the earliest possible steps to combine with their neighbours in the matter of administrative services so far as this is practicable."

Almost immediately after this came the Attachment Scheme according to which a large number of states in Western India, Orissa and Simla Hills were grouped for purposes of administration. In most cases they were given common judicial officers, a common police force, common revenue, medical and forest officers.

The reaction of the princes, generally speaking, was adverse to the Attachment Scheme. Many of them thought it to be the thin end of the wedge. But that did not deter Linlithgow. Three years later he went still further and introduced the Grouping Scheme which envisaged the merger of small states with one of their big neighbours for administrative purposes.

Certain Gujarat states were merged with Baroda, and some with Nawanagar and a few other states. This step confirmed the suspicion of the princes that their territorial integrity was no more sacrosanct and that in the eyes of the Paramount Power administrative convenience had got precedence over treaty rights.

In all probability it was because of Lord Linlithgow's straightforward attitude in the matter of administrative standards in the states which deprived him of success in getting the Instrument of Accession signed by the princes. It is an irony of fate that his earnestness and good intentions should have deprived Lord Linlithgow of credit from the princes as also recognition at the hands of the Indian people.

## APPENDIX A

Extracts from the Presidential Address of  
Diwan Bahadur M Ramachandra Rao at  
the All-India States' Peoples' Conference  
held at Bombay in December, 1927

### *Princes and Political Evolution of India*

There is yet another fundamental point to which I must make a reference. That point, to put it in the words of Lord Olivier, is, "Whether and how far the relations now subsisting between the King and all other Indian States can be transferred to the execution of an Indian National Government not responsible, as now, to the British Parliament but to a federal Indian assembly." During the discussions in the Legislative Assembly on the subject of dominion Self-Government for India during the last two or three years, the spokesmen of the Government of India pointedly raised the same question more than once. Sir Malcolm Hailey said that the Government of India would like to know "whether the states would continue as heretofore to deal with the Governor-General in Council who is responsible to the British Parliament or with the executive Government responsible to the Indian Legislature. Is Indian self-Government to be confined to British India only or was it to be extended to the states also? Are they to be dependent on the Crown or are they to be controlled by a new Government responsible only to the Indian Legislature instead of a Government responsible to the British Parliament."

The Constitutional issue thus raised by Lord Olivier and Sir Malcolm Hailey has been answered more than once by eminent Indian statesmen who are recognised authorities on Indian Constitutional Law. The contention that Indian States have entered into treaty relations with the Governor-General as representative of the British Crown and not of the executive head of the Government of India for the time being is without foundation. Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Iyer very recently examined the question again and has clearly expressed the opinion that "the treaties do not merely confer a personal right or obligations but impose obligations on the rulers for the time being of the Indian States in favour of the authorities for the time being in charge of the Government of India." It is not, therefore, correct to say that the treaties were entered into with the Crown, irrespective of this sovereignty of British India and if this sovereignty of British India is transferred by the Crown acting with the British Parliament to an Indian National Parliament the Indian States cannot claim to have any constitutional relations solely with the British Crown and independently of the Government as defined in a new constitution.

Sir Malcolm Hailey expressed the opinion that 'some kind of federation is the objective frequently suggested to the Government of India and his speech leads one to conclude that, in his opinion some such federation would be necessary but that the terms on which such a federation should be secured between British India and the Indian States should first be settled. Sir Malcolm could not have forgotten the public pronouncement of the Indian princes in regard to the political evolution of India and should not have had any doubt as to their attitude. Ten years ago the Maharaja of Bikaner gave in a general way the answer to these points. He said "there can be no more mistaken view than that the Indian princes will look with disfavour or

apprehension upon political development in India. On the contrary, they would rejoice to see India politically progressing on constitutional lines under the British flag.' Nor do I see any reason why the princes should hesitate to be constitutionally connected with a Government responsible only to the Indian Legislature. The states will have suitable representation in the federal Legislature and in the federal Executive that may come into existence and in all other federal assemblies for the control of federal affairs. A federal Executive and a federal Legislature in the making of which the princes and the people of states will have a voice would undoubtedly protect their rights very much better than a Government which is not responsible to them and the Parliament in which they have no representation. I do not, therefore, believe that the Indian Princes as a body would not co-operate with us in coming into a federation with British India and in the political reconstruction of India.\* Their active help and assistance is necessary in attaining our ideals for the political emancipation of our motherland and we may rely on their lofty patriotism to come into line with the political aspirations of the people of India as a whole.

I have referred briefly to these vital aspects of the problem and do not feel called upon to take up any more of your time by the discussion of further details, nor do I wish to refer to any of the schemes that are now holding the field. Our energies must be devoted to evolving a scheme acceptable to the Princes and the people of the Indian States and of British India, the further details of federal constitutions

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\*Subsequent events showed that the speaker was over-optimistic about the role of the princes in Indian federation. Though there was good reason for Dewan Bahadur Ramchandra Rao to say what he did, he could have hardly anticipated that the princes would go back on their own exuberant exhortations when actually called upon to sign the Instrument of Accession.

such as the composition of a federal legislature, or of a federal executive, the functions of the federal state, the constitution of federal finance, the exact powers of intervention to be reserved to the federal Government in the internal administration of the states and various other matters should receive detailed consideration only after the states are scheduled into (1) real sovereign States, (2) States which are feudal in their character, (3) States which are altogether non-sovereign; and for that purpose, I trust, you will, while agreeing to the general principles appoint a suitable committee to formulate a scheme purposely for final adoption by this and other Conferences of State subjects in the near future.

### Internal Administration

The characteristic feature of all the states including the most advanced is the personal rule of the Prince and his control over legislation, administration and justice. The states are in all stages of development, patriarchal, feudal or more advanced while in a few states, representative institutions which have been described as the dim colourless copies of those prevailing in British India have been established. The new constitution of Mysore has received a considerable measure of approbation and is the only outstanding development of constitutional importance in the States in recent years. A Government which owes its success to the personal character of the ruler can never afford any guarantee for progress. Akbar was a great ruler and it was impossible even for an Akbar to provide that he should be succeeded by another Akbar. A settled constitution which recognises the responsibility of the administration to the people and containing all the essential elements of a popular Government is the only safeguard for the protection of the people.

## The New Order

Many of the Princes have moved in the warm currents of world politics and are also cognisant of the reactions of world forces on India. As members of the League of Nations they have taken part in recasting the map of Europe and have pleaded for the self determination of small nationalities and the protection of minority communities. They have also taken part in the financial, economic, and political reconstruction of many countries in the world, and in activities which have given a new sense of humanity to all nations. They cannot refuse to co operate and give their helping hand in the political reconstruction of their own motherland. As members of the League they have had opportunities of surveying the political conditions of every country in the world and of realising that the divine right of the monarchical order is an anachronism at the present day. They cannot expect its continuance in their own states on the old basis. On behalf of the Princes of India, the Maharaja of Bikaner assured the League of Nations that they are entirely for the establishment of the rule of law. He cannot legitimately object to the extension of the same rule to the Indian States. As members of the Imperial Conference some of the Princes have strongly pleaded for new constitutional charter for India and for the establishment of dominion of self-Government.

## Conclusion

Gentlemen, the deliberations of your conference this year are of a peculiar significance and are particularly important for a variety of reasons. The National movement in British India for the establishment of Swaraj has gathered increased strength and momentum and we are now pressing for radical alterations in the present constitution. Our ideals for the future Government of India have been some-



time ago summarised by Lord Lytton in the following propositions :—

(1) We desire to see India free from any foreign domination.

(2) We desire to see India defended by armed forces consisting of our own people and acting under the orders of our own Government.

(3) We desire to see India governed by an executive answerable to a Parliament elected by our people.

We are thankful to His Lordship for having so correctly and so unambiguously stated in the British press the three fundamental ideals of our political faith. I refuse to believe that there is anybody in the Indian States be he a Prince or a peasant, who will not wholeheartedly subscribe to these ideals and who will not do his best to realise them. A large vision of Indian political destiny has permeated all classes of people throughout India and that on this main question there is and there can be absolutely no difference between the people of British India and the Indian States. A free, strong, united, self-governing and self-supporting India is our aim and ideal. In familiarising the people of the State with our national ideals your services, are, therefore, invaluable and this conference is doing its best to bring the States into general harmony with the political developments in British India. The Indian National Congress, the Muslim League, the National Liberal Federation, the Hindu Mahasabha and other political organisations in British India are now actively engaged in examining the question of a new constitution for India. The All-India Congress Committee has charged the Working Committee of the Congress to frame a scheme in consultation with the various political parties in the country. I sincerely hope that this committee and the other political organisations will not con-

has been the inspiration of men for ages past and will be for ages to come, India sanctified by God Himself as Sri Krishna, India of Buddha and Sankara and of Munis and Rishis, the land of Ganga and Kashi and Himachala which always lives, while other countries run feverishly through their hour of conceit and ambition and pass away to be remembered only as warnings. The whole of India should be under constitutional Swaraj ; neither one part of it under dishonouring alien sway nor another under autocratic though indigenous rule. Federated India, call it the United States of India or by any other suitable name, made up of autonomous states and provinces, the former under their hereditary rulers reigning as constitutional heads of states—owing allegiance to a strong responsible central government truly representative of both the states and the provinces. This is the dearly cherished national aspiration of every Indian patriot.

### The Butler Committee

In my humble opinion, gentlemen, the Butler Committee was bad in its origin, bad in the time chosen for its appointment, bad in its terms of reference, bad in its personnel and bad in its line of inquiry, while its report is bad in its reasoning and bad in its conclusions. In saying this, I am not unaware of the quality and the quantity of adverse criticism that will be heaped upon my devoted head for my temerity in indulging in language so plain and so frankly uncomplimentary. But, to hear criticism is part of the business of the day for any public man worth his salt. Certain of our Ruling Princes, more zealous than discreet, I fear, asked for this Committee and for trouble. I advisedly say 'certain' for some of the most important among them did not want it or care for it. I am told that one of the dissentient Princes expressed his view in the homely words 'let sleeping dogs lie'. That the Princes are not altogether happy in the relations of the states with the Government of India is a fact. I do not mean that their

personal relations are unpleasant or that the Government have been slow to overload them with titles of all sorts. But they are convinced that some of the rights which are theirs by treaty and ought to be theirs in actual fact, have been flched away from them on one plea or another, and they are not free from the fear that the process may continue to their personal annoyance and to the detriment of their states.

### A Regrettable Feature

But what a committee they got and how much of satisfaction from it! If I may say so without disrespect, they chose the wrong time for it as well as the wrong manner. While I gratefully appreciate the sympathy that some of the Princes have almost uniformly extended to the constitutional movement for political reform in British India, notable among them being their Highnesses the Maharaja Gackwar, the late Maharaja Sindhia and the Maharaja of Bikaner, I could not help feeling and saying in 1917-18, and again now, that the betrayal of exaggerated anxiety for their rights just when the introduction or the extension of reforms in British India is under consideration has created the unfortunate impression that they are not prepared to repose in the motives and purposes of their own countrymen, the confidence they profess in the British Government the same British Government which, they complain, has not been wholly just in honouring their treaty rights.

### The Greatest Mischief

Sir Harcourt Butler and his colleagues have dealt a blow at India, for which they deserve and must receive the severest condemnation. And for this the Princes of the Standing Committee of their Chamber must share full responsibility. They are partners in guilt, as it were, if I may say so without meaning disrespect. All that is intended to

be connoted and implied by the new fangled theory of 'direct relationship with the Crown' was stated in the most naked form by Sir Leslie Scott in the following passage :—

"The British Government as paramount power has undertaken the defence of all the States and therefore to remain in India with whatever military and naval forces may be requisite to enable it to discharge that obligation. It cannot hand over these forces to any other government—to a far off foreign power such as France or Japan; to a dominion government such as Canada or Australia, nor even to British India."

The legal soundness of this proposition was examined by the Nehru Committee which included lawyers of the eminence of Pandit Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sir Syed Ali Imam, by Sir Sivaswami Aiyer and Sir Ramaswami Aiyer, lawyers of equal distinction, and they were unanimous in rejecting it.

### **Governments of the State**

I now come to the internal government of the states the subject in which the members of this conference are, I assume, more immediately concerned. If I understand your position aright, gentlemen, none of you want to see the states wiped out and converted into British provinces. If you did, I frankly state that I should not be here. But you do not. It were unnatural if you did. How can any people wish to exchange indigenous for foreign rule? It is true, it is said, that the Swaraj you enjoy is not the Swaraj you and we equally wish for, viz., 'government of the people, for the people, by the people.' The aim and endeavour of this conference is to bring about a transformation of the character and constitution of the government of the states; such that it may approximate to the ideal defined by Abraham Lincoln in

the historic phrase I have quoted. Both in British and Indian India constitutional government is the desideratum.

### A Federal Constitution

The reforms leading up to responsible government in the states combined with responsible government in British India, will facilitate a Union of the states and the provinces under a Federal Government for the whole of India, each of the bigger states and of the Governor's provinces forming a unit. The essentials of the future Government of India have been thus described by a great authority on constitutional problems :—

(1) India must have a rigid constitution ; (2) federalism must be the watch-word of the constitution ; (3) State and provincial autonomy ; (4) residuary powers in the central government ; (5) Indian States must have the same status as separate provincial units ; (6) no separate electorates ; (7) two chambers in the central legislature ; (8) the lower one must be on the basis of population, and the upper one on the basis of the provinces and states as units.

### Is Federation Immediately Feasible ?

I would again say to the Ruling Princes with the utmost respect but with great emphasis that their best friends and sincerest well-wishers will be found not in the Indian Civil Service or in the Political Department or among English in general in India or England, but among their own loyal subjects and among the public of British India. It is this truth which they have to impress upon themselves. This done, all else will be comparatively easy. Given co-operation between the states and the provinces, Swaraj must be ours as surely as tomorrow's sun will rise in the east.

Extracts from the Presidential Address at  
the all India States' People's Conference held  
at Ludhiana on 15th and 16th February 1939,  
by Jawahar Lal Nehru

### **Will of the People is Final Authority**

Many people have, in past years, criticised the attitude of the National Congress towards the States and heated argument has taken place about intervention & non intervention. That criticism and argument have perished with the yesterday that has gone and are meaningless to-day. Yet it is worthwhile to consider briefly the development of Congress policy in regard to the states. I have not always approved of all the expressions of this policy or liked the emphasis on certain aspects of the problem. But I am convinced that this fundamental policy was the correct one under the circumstances and, indeed subsequent events have justified it completely. A policy, aiming at vital change or revolution, must keep in touch with reality and the conditions that prevail. As these conditions change, that policy changes. Brave words and gesture or strongly-worded resolution out of touch with objective conditions, do not bring about that pregnant atmosphere out of which revolutionary change is born. Nor can that condition be created artificially or mass movements launched unless the masses themselves are ready and prepared. The Congress realised this and knew of the unpreparedness of the people in the states. It husbanded its energy in the struggle outside well realising that this was the most effective method of influencing

the States' people and making them ready for their own struggle.

The Haripura resolution was a landmark in the evolution of Congress policy and it enunciated this in clear language. The integrity and unity of India was an essential part of the independence we worked for and the same full measure of political, social and economic freedom was to come to the states as to the rest of India. There could be no compromise on this, and the Congress declared afresh in favour of full Responsible Government and the guarantee of civil liberty in the states. Further, it declared to be its right and privilege to work for the attainment of the objectives in the states. There was no question of non-intervention; the Congress, as representing the will of the Indian people, recognises no bars which limit its freedom of activity in any matter pertaining to India and her people. It is its right and privilege and its duty to intervene in any such matter whenever the interests of India demand it.

The Congress knew well that the backwardness of the states hindered our national progress and that there could be no freedom for India unless the states ceased to be what they were. The Congress was eager to bring about this essential and vital change and yet it knew that the change could only come about from below, when the people of the states grew self-reliant and organised and capable of shouldering the burden of their struggle. It emphasised this. Not to have done so would have been to mislead and encourage vain delusion, and delay the building up in the states themselves of an organisation which would represent the strength and will of the people.

### One Mighty Struggle

The wisdom of the Congress stands amply justified today when we see the developments that have taken place since

Haripura All the states are astir and in many of them powerful mass movements are functioning. The people of the states are rapidly coming into line with the rest of India; they are no longer a burden and a dead weight keeping us back. They are setting the pace for India today and our national politics are dominated by their struggle. The time has come, therefore for the integration of these various struggles in the states *inter se* and with the major struggle against British Imperialism. There are no longer many different struggles going on for independence, there is only one mighty struggle for India's freedom, though its aspects may vary and though its battle grounds may be many. As Gandhiji has said, the struggle for liberty whenever it takes place, is a struggle for all India.

It is in the fitness of things that at this moment of vital crisis for the states, India's leader, ever thinking of her freedom and jealous of her honour, should step out and in his ringing voice of old that we remember so well, give faith and courage to our people. Gandhiji's lead has finally settled all the old arguments that obscured the issue, and that issue stands out now clear and definite.

### Those Treaties

We are told now of the so-called independence of the states and of their treaties with Paramount Power, which are sacrosanct and inviolable and apparently must go on for ever and ever. We have seen what happens to international treaties and the most sacred of covenants when they do not suit the purposes of imperialism. We have recently seen these treaties torn up, friends and allies basely deserted and betrayed and the pledged word broken by England and France. Democracy and freedom were the sufferers and so it did not matter. But when reaction and autocracy and imperialism stand to lose, it does matter, and treaties, however moth-eaten and harmful to the people they might be, have to be preserved. It is a



monstrous imposition to be asked to put up with these treaties of a century and a quarter ago, in the making of which the people had no voice or say. It is fantastic to expect the people to keep on their chains of slavery, imposed upon them by force and fraud, and to submit to a system which crushed the lifeblood out of them. The only final authority and paramount power that we recognise is the will of the people, and the only thing that counts ultimately is the good of the people.

### Choice Before the People

What is the nature of the conflict today? This must be understood. It varies slightly from state to state, but the demand everywhere is for full responsible government. Yet the conflict is not at present to enforce that demand, but to establish the right of organising people for that demand. When this right is denied and civil liberties are crushed, no way is left open to the people to carry on what are called constitutional methods of agitation. The full establishment of civil liberties is an essential preliminary to any progress. It is an insult to India to ask her to tolerate in the states ordinance rule and the suppression of organisations and the prevention of public gatherings and methods, usually associated with the gangster. Are the states to remain vast prisons, where the human spirit is sought to be extinguished and the resources of the people are to be used for the pageantry and luxury of courts, while the masses starve and remain illiterate and backward? Are the Middle Ages to continue in India under the protection of British Imperialism?

## APPENDIX B

### The Covenant.

Entered into by rulers of Kathiawar  
states for the formation of the  
United State of Kathiawar

WE the Rulers of certain States in Kathiawar, BEING CONVINCED that the welfare of the people of this region can best be secured by the establishment of a State comprising the territories of the numerous States, Estates and Talukas in Kathiawar with a common Executive, Legislature and Judiciary;

AND HAVING resolved to entrust to a Constituent Assembly consisting of elected representatives of the people the drawing up of a democratic Constitution for that State within the framework of the Constitution of India to which we have already acceded, and of this Covenant,

DO HEREBY, with the concurrence and guarantee of the Government of India, enter into the following COVENANT:—

#### Article I

In this Covenant,

(a) "Covenanting State" means any of the States mentioned in Schedule I the Ruler of which has, whether by himself or by a duly authorised representative, signed this Covenant ;

(b) "Covenanting Salute State" means any Covenanting State which is mentioned in Part A of Schedule I;

(c) "Covenanting Non-Salute State" means any Covenanting State which is mentioned in Part B of Schedule I; and

(d) unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context, references to the Ruler of a State, or the Talukdar of a Taluka, include any person or persons for the time being exercising the powers of the Ruler or Talukdar whether by reason of his minority or for any other reason.

## Article II.

(1) The Covenanting states agree-

(a) to unite and integrate their territories in one State, with a common executive, legislature and judiciary, by the name of "THE UNITED STATE OF KATHIAWAR"; and

(b) to include in the United State so established, any other State, Taluka or Estate the Ruler or Talukdar of which agrees, with the approval of the Government of India: to the merger of the State, Taluka or Estate in the United State of Kathiawar.

(2) The terms of all the agreements of merger referred to in clause (b) of paragraph (1) of this Article shall be binding on the United State and shall be deemed to be part of this Covenant.

## Article III.

(1) There shall be a Council of the Rulers of the Covenanting Salute States.

(2) There shall be a Presidium consisting of five members, each of whom shall be the Ruler of a Covenanting State and shall be not less than 21 years of age.

(3) Subject to the condition mentioned in paragraph (2) of this Article, the Rulers of Nawanagar and Bhavnagar shall be permanent members of the Presidium, one member shall be elected from among themselves by the Rulers of the Covenanting Non-Salute States, and the other members shall be elected from among themselves by the members of the Council of Rulers other than Nawanagar and Bhavnagar.

(4) The Council of Rulers shall elect one member of the Presidium to be the President, and another to be the Vice-President of the Presidium, and the President so elected shall be the RAJ PRAMUKH of the United State

(5) A Ruler elected as a member of the Presidium in pursuance of paragraph (3), or the President or the Vice-President of the Presidium in pursuance of paragraph (4) of this Article shall be entitled to hold office as such member, President, as the case may be, for a term of five years from the date on which he enters upon the duties of that office

(6) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in the preceding paragraphs of this Article,

- (a) the present Rulers of Nawanagar and Bhavnagar, having been elected President and Vice-President respectively, of the Presidium by the Rulers concerned on the 17th January, 1948, shall be the first President and the Vice-President, respectively of the Presidium ;
- (b) the present Rulers of Dhrangadhra, Palitana and Kotda-Sangali, having been elected members of

the Presidium by the Rulers concerned on the 17th and 21st January, 1948, shall be the first elected members of the Presidium ; and

- (c) the said President, Vice-President and members of the Presidium shall, for the purpose of paragraph (5) of this Article, be deemed to have entered upon the duties of their respective offices on the 1st February, 1948.

#### Article IV.

(1) The Raj Pramukh shall be entitled to the same salary, allowances, and other amenities enabling him to discharge conveniently and with dignity the duties of his office; as the Governor of Bombay is entitled to on the 20th January, 1948.

(2) If the Raj Pramukh is by reason of absence or illness, or for any other reason, unable to perform the duties of his office, those duties shall, until he has resumed them, be performed by the Vice-President of the Presidium. During such period the Vice-President shall be entitled to the same salary, allowances and other amenities as the Raj Pramukh.

#### Article V.

(1) There shall be a Council of Ministers to aid and advise the Raj Pramukh in the exercise of his functions except those under paragraph (2) of Article VII.

(2) The Ministers shall be chosen by and shall hold office during the pleasure of, the Raj Pramukh.

(3) For the purpose of choosing the first Council of Ministers the Raj Pramukh shall convene, not later than the 20th February, 1948, a meeting of the members

(2) It shall be the duty of the said Assembly to frame a Constitution for the United State (whether of a unitary or federal type) within the framework of this Covenant and the Constitution of India, and providing for a government responsible to the legislature

(3) Until a Constitution so framed comes into operation after receiving the assent of the Raj Pramukh, the legislative authority of the United State shall vest in the Raj Pramukh, who may make and promulgate Ordinances for the peace and good government of the State or any part thereof and any Ordinance so made shall have the like force of law as an Act passed by the legislature of the State

### **Article X**

(1) The Ruler of each Covenanting State shall be entitled to receive annually from the revenues of the United State for his privy purse the amount specified against that Covenanting State in Schedule 1

(2) The said amount is intended to cover all the expenses of the Ruler and his family including expenses on account of his personal staff, maintenance of his residences, marriages and other ceremonies, etc and shall neither be increased nor reduced for any reason whatsoever

(3) The Raj Pramukh shall cause the said amount to be paid to the Ruler in four equal instalments at the beginning of each quarter in advance

(4) The said amount shall be free of all taxes, whether imposed by the Government of United State of Kathiawar or by the Government of India

### **Article XI**

(1) The Ruler of each Covenanting State shall be entitled to the full ownership, use and enjoyment of all

private properties (as distinct from State properties) belonging to him on date of his making over the administration of that State to the Raj Pramukh.

(2) He shall furnish to the Raj Pramukh within one month of the said date an inventory of all the immovable properties, securities and cash balances held by him as such private property.

(3) If any dispute arises to whether any item of property is the private property of the Ruler of State property, it shall be referred to such person as the Government of India may nominate, and the decision of that person shall be final and binding on all parties concerned.

### **Article XII.**

The Ruler of each Covenanting State, as also the members of his family shall be entitled to all the personal privileges, dignities and titles enjoyed by them, whether within or outside the territories of the State, immediately before the 15th day of August, 1947.

### **Article XIII.**

(1) The succession, according to law and custom, to the gaddi of each Covenanting State, and to the personal rights, privileges, dignities and titles of the Ruler thereof, is hereby guaranteed.

(2) Every question of disputed succession in regard to a Covenanting State shall be decided by the Council of Rulers after referring to the High Court of Kathiawar and in accordance with the opinion given by that High Court.

### **Article XIV.**

No enquiry shall be made by or under the authority of the State of Kathiawar, and no proceedings shall lie in any

court in that State, against the Ruler of any Covenanted State, whether in a personal capacity or otherwise, in respect of anything done or omitted to be done by him or under his authority during the period of his administration of that State

### Article XV.

The Government of Kathiawar shall, in consultation with the Government of India and the Government of Bombay, take all steps necessary to set up a joint Advisory Council, consisting of Ministers of Kathiawar and Ministers of the Province of Bombay, for investigating and discussing in particular recommendations for the better co-ordination of policy and action with respect to any such subject.

### Article XVI

(1) The United State of Kathiawar hereby guarantees either the continuance in service of the permanent members of the Public services of each of the Covenanted States on conditions which will be not less advantageous than those on which they were serving before the date on which the administration of that State is made over to the Raj Pramukh or the payment of reasonable compensation

(2) The United State of Kathiawar further guarantees the continuance of pensions and leave salaries sanctioned by competent authorities in any of the Covenanted States to members of the public services of that State who have retired or proceeded on leave preparatory to retirement, before the date referred to in paragraph (1) of this article.

(3) the provisions of paragraph (1) and (2) of this Article shall apply also in relation to the public services of any other State in Kathiawar merging in the United State of Kathiawar; and the provisions of para-



graph (1) shall apply also in relation to any staff of the Regional Commissioner, Western India and Gujarat States, which may be transferred to the service of the United State of Kathiawar.

### Article XVII.

Except with the previous sanction of the Raj Pramukh, no proceedings, civil or criminal, shall be instituted against any person in respect of any act done or purporting to be done in the execution of his duty as a servant of any Covenanting State before the date on which the administration thereof is made over to the Raj Pramukh.

### Article XVIII.

Nothing in this Covenant shall be deemed to prevent the Government of Kathiawar from negotiating a Union of Kathiawar with other Gujarati-speaking areas on such terms and conditions as may be agreed to by the Council of Rulers, as well as the Council of Ministers, of Kathiawar.

### SCHEDULE I

Covenanting States and Privy Purse		Amounts
Part A—Salute States.		
		Rs.
1. Nawanagar		10,00,000
2. Bhavnagar		10,00,000
3. Porbandar		3,80,000
4. Dhrangadhra		3,80,000
5. Morvi		8,00,000
6. Gondal		8,00,000
7. Jafrabad		16,000
8. Wankaner		1,80,000
9. Palitana		1,80,000
10. Dhrol		1,10,000
11. Limbdi		1,95,000
12. Rajkot		2,85,000
13. Wadhwan		1,42,000

## Part B—Non-Salute States.

1. Lakhtar	91,000
2. Sayla	62,500
3. Chuda	51,250
4. Vala	88,750
5. Jasdan	1,50,000
6. Amarnagar Thana Devli	1,00,000
7. Vadia	78,250
8. Lathi	77,500
9. Muli	...
10. Bajana	65,500
11. Virpur	44,500
12. Maliya	47,500
13. Kotda-Sangani	67,000
14. Jetpur	1,00,000
15. Bilkha	1,00,000
16. Patdi	20,000
17. Khirasra	30,000

## SCHEDULE II.

Provisions relating to the Kathiawar Constituent Assembly.

1. The Assembly shall consist of not more than forty-five elected representatives of the people of the United State of Kathiawar on the basis of one representative for approximately one lakh of the population :

Provided that the people of each Covenanting Salute State shall, irrespective of their number, be entitled to elect at least one representative.

2. The United State of Kathiawar shall be divided into territorial constituencies, and the total number of seats shall be distributed among them by assigning to each constituency one or two seats as may be convenient. As far as

possible the constituencies shall be so delimited as not to cut across the boundaries of any compact part of a Covenanted State.

3. The qualifications for membership of the Assembly and for being included in the electoral rolls shall be similar to those prescribed in relation to the Provincial Legislative Assembly of Bombay, subject to necessary modifications :

Provided that no person shall be disqualified either from being chosen as, or from being a member of the Assembly or from being included in the electoral roll of a constituency, merely because he is the ruler of a Covenanted or other State, or the Talukdar of a Taluka or Estate.

4. An order shall in due course be made and proclaimed by the Raj Pramukh providing consistently with the foregoing provisions of this schedule, for—

- (a) the delimitation of constituencies ;
- (b) the preparation of electoral rolls ;
- (c) the qualifications for membership of the Assembly ;
- (d) the qualifications entitling persons to vote in the elections ;
- (e) conduct of the elections, including bye-elections for the filling of casual vacancies ;
- (f) corrupt practices at or in connection with such elections ; and
- (g) the decision of doubts and disputes arising out of or in connection with such elections.

In confirmation of the above Covenant we append our signatures, on behalf of ourselves, our heirs and successors.

(Sd.) Rulers of the  
Covenanted States

The Government of India hereby concur in the above Covenant and guarantee all its provisions. In confirmation whereof Mr. Vapal Pangunni Menon, Secretary to the Government of India in the Ministry of States, appends his signatures on behalf and with the authority of the Government of India.

(Sd.) V. P. Menon  
Secretary to the Government of India,  
Ministry of States.

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